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THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

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VOLUME THE FIRST.

CONTAINING

THE THREE FIRST CENTURIES.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

BY THE AUTHOR.

IN my Propoſals for printing this "Hiſtory of the Church of Chriſt" I promiſed "An Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory on a new Plan." The Reader therefore will naturally expect ſome diſtinct account of a plan, which, in a ſubject ſo generally known, lays claim to novelty, in order that he may judge for himſelf, whether it appears ſufficiently intereſting to engage his peruſal of the work itſelf.

It it certain, that from our Saviour's time to the preſent, there have ever been perſons whoſe diſpoſitions and lives have been formed by the rules of the New Teſtament; men who have been REAL, not merely NOMINAL Chriſtians; who believed the doctrines of the Goſpel, loved them becauſe of their divine excellency, and ſuffered gladly the LOSS OF ALL THINGS, THAT THEY MIGHT WIN CHRIST, AND BE FOUND IN HIM*. It is the hiſtory of theſe men which I propoſe to write. It is of no conſequence, with reſpect to

* Philip. iii. 8, 9.

to my plan, nor of much importance I believe in its own nature, to what EXTERNAL Church they belonged. I intend not to enter with any nicety into an account of their rites and ceremonies, or forms of Church-government, much leſs into their ſecular hiſtory. Even RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES ſhall be omitted; except thoſe, which ſeem to bear a relation to the eſſence of Chriſt's religion, and of which the hiſtory of his real Church requires ſome account. Let not the Reader expect, that the actions of great men,—great in a ſecular view I mean,—will be exhibited to his notice. Nothing, but what appears to me to belong to Chriſt's kingdom, ſhall be admitted: genuine piety is the only thing, which I intend to celebrate.

It muſt have ſtruck a careful obſerver, that SUCH a hiſtory is as yet a great DESIDERATUM. Malice has been fed, even to ſatiety, by the large diſplays of ECCLESIASTICAL WICKEDNESS. The wildeſt and the moſt viſionary Heretics have filled the hiſtoric page; and their follies, both in principle and practice, have been deemed worthy of a particular enumeration. The internal diſſenſions of Churches have been minutely deſcribed. The intricacies and intrigues of Popery, and indeed of every other ſecular ſyſtem,

ſyſtem, which pretends to wear a religious garb, have been developed with a ſtudious particularity: The connexion between the Church and the ſtate has afforded very ample materials of what is commonly called Church-Hiſtory; and learning and philoſophy have been much more reſpected than godlineſs and virtue.

No doubt ſome more ancient voluminous Church-Hiſtorians, as well as Moſheim in his Compendium, have given us much uſeful information; and if one might look on them as CIVIL hiſtorians altogether, there would not be much room for blame. Further, if they had incorporated into their ſecular narratives an account of the progreſs of godlineſs itſelf, I ſhould not have dared to reprehend them as Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtorians: But they evidently give a much larger proportion to the hiſtory of wickedneſs, than to that of piety in general. Hence the evils, which have been practiſed in Chriſtian countries, ſeem even greater than they really were; and, the diſagreeable inference, which the reading of Moſheim produced in my own mind, is probably no ſingular caſe, viz.—that real religion appears ſcarcely to have had any exiſtence. Infidel malice has triumphed, though very unreaſonably, on account of theſe things; the vices of Chriſtians, ſo called, have

have certainly been exaggerated on the whole; and Deiſts and Sceptics have taken advantage, partly from ſuch exaggeration and partly from the poverty of our information concerning Mahometans and Pagans, to repreſent BOTH as more virtuous than Chriſtians.

What account can be given of this unhappily partial view of Church-Hiſtory?— Genuine godlineſs is fond of ſecrecy: Humility is of its eſſence: She ſeeks not the praiſe of men, but the praiſe of God; and hides even the good ſhe does from the world more ſtudiouſly than wickedneſs conceals its evils: Her ſincereſt votries have, likewiſe, been chiefly private perſons, ſuch as have ſeldom moved in the public and noiſy ſpheres of life. The moſt celebrated hiſtorians, who hitherto have appeared, ſeem not to have had ſo much reliſh for godlineſs, as to be induced to take any pains to draw her out of her modeſt obſcurity *. The prevalence of wickedneſs in all ages

* Fox's Book of Martyrs is, however, one ſtriking exception to this remark. The Magdeburgenſian Centuriators, whom I did not meet with, till I had finiſhed this Volume, are likewiſe, in part, exempted from the charge of writing Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory in the ſecular manner, which I have reprehended. Yet while they omit, or very lamely recount, ſome moſt important Chriſtian facts, they relate with tedious exactneſs many unintereſting particulars. They ſeem, however, to have been men of real piety, induſtry, and learning, and may be of much uſe

ages has heightened the difficulty*. From theſe cauſes the ſcarcity of materials, for what properly deſerves the name of Church-Hiſtory, is much greater than any perſon, who has not examined the ſubject, can even conceive. I have all along, however, to the beſt of my ability and opportunity, conſulted original records, and have never contented myſelf with copying the ſentiments of modern hiſtorians.

I hope I ſhall be allowed to call the plan, I propoſe, a proper one. Certainly, the terms "Church and Chriſtian" do in their moſt NATURAL and PRIMARY SENSE reſpect only GOOD men. The Divine Founder of our religion has promiſed, THAT THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT. Such a ſucceſſion of pious men in all ages muſt

uſe to me in ſubſequent parts of the hiſtory, ſhould I continue it.

The volume of Mr. Newton is well known, and its merit has been acknowledged by men of piety and judgment. I once thought of beginning only where he ended. But as there is an unity of manner and ſtyle which belongs to every author who plans and executes for himſelf; and, as in ſome points I really found myſelf to differ in ſentiment from this very reſpectable writer, I altered my opinion, contented in this place to acknowledge, that ſo far as I can recollect, the peruſal of his inſtructive volume of Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory firſt ſuggeſted to me the idea of this work.

* A hiſtory of the perverſions and abuſes of religion is not properly a hiſtory of the Church: as abſurd were it to ſuppoſe an hiſtory of the highway-men that have infeſted this country to be a hiſtory of England.

muſt, therefore, have exiſted; and it will be no contemptible uſe of ſuch a hiſtory as this, if it prove, that, in every age, there have been REAL followers of Chriſt. Other uſes cannot fail to offer themſelves. To ſee and trace the goodneſs of God taking care of his Church in every age by his Providence and Grace, will be, to the devout mind, a refreſhment of the moſt grateful nature. The honour of Chriſtianity will be ſupported; the value of its eſſential doctrines will be aſcertained, and we ſhall have frequent occaſion to ſtate what the Goſpel is, and what it is not. Hence the triumphs of the Sceptic will appear to be unfounded in truth; when it ſhall be evident on the whole, —that Chriſt's religion has ever exiſted and brought forth its proper fruits, to which no other ſyſtem can make any juſt pretenſion; and finally,—that the evils of which Chriſtians, ſo called, have been guilty, aroſe not from the Goſpel itſelf, but from the hypocriſy of thoſe who aſſumed that worthy Name, to which neither their faith nor their practice gave them any right.

Theſe, and other obvious advantages of ſuch a hiſtory, have determined me to attempt it. I feel oppreſſed with the greatneſs of the ſubject: Nevertheleſs, with God's help,

I mean

I mean to proceed. IN MAGNIS VOLUISSE SAT EST.

I have two things further to premiſe, 1ſt. To aſſure the Reader that I ſhall think it my indiſpenſable duty to give him real facts; and, if I be rather more copious in reflections than the ſevere laws of hiſtory allow, he will do well to obſerve, that the faſhionable miſrepreſentations of ancient ſtory require conſiderable attention.

And, 2dly. I fairly warn the Reader not to expect from me any indulgence in the modern taſte of Scepticiſm. I ſhall not affect to doubt the credibility of ancient reſpectable hiſtorians. And, as it is hardly poſſible to avoid altogether the infection of the age in which one lives, I ſeem to myſelf ſufficiently ſecured, by the torrent of prevailing opinions, from the other extreme of ſuperſtitious belief. Both ought to be avoided: but that, which ſupports itſelf by the appearance of extraordinary ſenſe, by the authority of great names, and by the love of applauſe, muſt of courſe be the more enſnaring. The preſent age in matters of religion may juſtly be called the age of ſelf-ſufficiency: We condemn the ancients by wholeſale, and without giving them a hearing: we ſuſpect their hiſtorical accounts without diſcrimination: malevolence and profaneneſs are both encouraged by

by ſuch conduct: we fancy ourſelves ſo ENLIGHTENED, as to be without any parallels in diſcernment: we are amazed, that our anceſtors ſhould ſo long have been deluded by abſurdities; and, we are very little aware how much ſome future age will pity or blame us for follies of which we imagine ourſelves perfectly clear.

J. M.

CENTURY

PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR,

CONTAINING

ANIMADVERSIONS

ON

Dr. HAWEIS'

IMPARTIAL AND SUCCINCT

HISTORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST.

ERRATA.

Page xxii. line 17, read hypocriſy.
xxviii. bottom, *r.* mentioned.
—— in the note, for Page 327, *r.* Pages 225, 226, and 227. Vol. ii. Mr. M.
xliii. in the note, *r.* Dr. H. Vol. i. p. 359.
7. l. 23. audience.
115. the note, *r.* Bullet.
137. l. 19, *r.* We.
176. l. 25, *r.* of its.
205. in the margin, *r.* A. D. 117.
235. in the margin, *r.* A. D. 177.
302. l. 14 *r.* ſuperſtitions,—all.
540. l. 26. *dele* as.
354. l. 15. *r.* philoſophical.

PREFACE

TO VOLUME I.

§ 1. THE Editor of this ſecond Edition of the firſt volume of the Hiſtory of the Church of Chriſt by the late Rev. Joſeph Milner, M. A. feels it his duty to inform the public, that, ſince the publication of the third volume of this work, two reaſons have concurred to retard conſiderably the progreſs of a fourth Volume.—1ſt. The copies of the firſt volume became ſo very ſcarce and were called for ſo often, that the bookſellers preſſed exceedingly for an immediate re-publication of it. —With their wiſhes the Editor thought it proper to comply; and by ſo doing, the little leiſure, which he could ſpare from indiſpenſable duties, has been almoſt entirely employed in reviſing and correcting this firſt volume. 2dly. The deceaſe of the Author, the worthy and beloved brother of the Editor,—has rendered it extremely difficult to prepare and fit for the Preſs ſuch of the manuſcripts as were intended to make a fourth volume.—While the Author was alive, many doubts and obſcurities might be cleared up in a few minutes, which now coſt the Editor hours and days; and, ſometimes, he is at laſt compelled to deſiſt from further inveſtigation, without ſuc-

ceſs, from want of knowing the meaning of ſome character of ſhorthand, or the proper edition to be made uſe of in conſulting the authorities.

If it ſhall pleaſe Almighty God to favour him with a tolerable ſhare of health, he ſtill hopes to ſurmount moſt of the difficulties,—though not quite ſo ſoon as he could wiſh.—If the fourth volume, whenever it ſhall appear, ſhould be thought leſs perfect than the reſt, the candid reader, it is hoped, will recollect the main reaſon;—which,—to the Author's relatives and intimates, is truly a melancholy one.

§ 2. The Editor is well perſuaded that the utility and propriety of continuing this Hiſtory upon the ſame plan with the three volumes already publiſhed, and with the fourth now in the preſs, is, by no means, ſuperſeded by a late publication of the Rev. Dr. HAWEIS, which he calls an impartial and ſuccinct Hiſtory of the Church of Chriſt.—Dr. H. indeed, repreſents himſelf and Mr. Milner as cordially united in the main point: He very often commends Mr. M. in ſtrong language;—and, in one place he ſays, "I had hoped from him friendly rebuke where I may have erred, or, candid acquieſcence in the force of truth where it appeared."—But, if it be allowed, that the ſpirit of authors, and the objects they have in view, are to be collected, not ſo much from profeſſions in prefaces or introductions, as from the works themſelves, no diſcerning reader can poſſibly be diſpoſed to infer much reſemblance between theſe two writers of Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory.—Who can peruſe Mr. M.'s volumes without being convinced, that the great object of the Author is to exhibit, in every age, the character of the real followers of Jeſus Chriſt, and the nature of genuine Chriſtianity, conſidered as a practical thing? For this purpoſe,

purpoſe, his labours abound with luminous details and expoſitions from original documents. The hiſtorian has generally an opinion of his own, and a pretty ſtrong one too, nor is he backward in diſcovering it; but, he is ever anxious to put his reader in poſſeſſion of the evidence on which it is founded; to lay before him all, which, he thinks, is authentic, and connected with the ſubject;—and ſo, to give him a fair opportunity of judging for himſelf. He ſubmits to him a chain of reaſoning and obſervation; but it is accompained with a regular body of collective hiſtorical proofs; which, when the Author's plan* is conſidered, diſtinguiſhes this publication from every other which has yet appeared.

§ 3. On the contrary, the haſty performance of Dr. H. is characterized throughout, by paucity of facts, by deficiency of evidence, and by poſitive and declamatory aſſertions.—The readers, who love to ſee eccleſiaſtical ranks, dignities and eſtabliſhments degraded and vilified with indiſcriminating averſion, will here meet with plenty of gratification for the ſour parts of their tempers, and for inveterate prejudices; though even of theſe readers—ſuch as are the more experienced and

* For an account of the author's plan ſee the Introduction by himſelf.—Vol. I.

"It is certain," ſays he, "that from our Saviour's time to the preſent, there have ever been perſons, whoſe diſpoſitions and lives have been formed by the rules of the New Teſtament: men, who have been REAL, not merely NOMINAL Chriſtians; who believed the doctrines of the Goſpel, loved them becauſe of their divine excellency, and ſuffered gladly THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, THAT THEY MIGHT WIN CHRIST, AND BE FOUND IN HIM*. It is the hiſtory of theſe men, which I propoſe to write."—INTRODUCTION.

* Philip. iii. 8, 9.

and judicious in the arts of lowering and diſparaging, will be apt to think that their author has overſhot his mark by an exceſs of anxiety to produce the effect he has in view.—Pride, ambition, and immoralities of every kind, are, no doubt, peculiarly odious in dignified eccleſiaſtics, yet it ſhould be remembered that, in endeavouring to excite our diſlike and abhorrence of theſe vices, the mind may be fatigued and even rendered callous by being battered with inceſſant repetitions; and particularly, when the harſh language derives its ſupport from manifeſt perverſions and exaggerations of hiſtory.—Nor ſhould it be forgotten, that even in ſtating ſimple events, the MANNER of doing it may diſcover very different feelings and tempers.—One does not expect that a narrative of the frauds, follies, hypocrify, and ambitious exceſſes of eccleſiaſtical dignitaries, by a Clergyman of the Church of England, ſhould, in any degree, reſemble the profane and malevolent repreſentations of the moſt inſulting and reprobate infidels: Many perſons will rather look for the wounded ſpirit of a humble Chriſtian and of a faithful hiſtorian ſorrowfully recording the truth.

§ 4. As Mr. M. is conſtantly in queſt of the true followers of Jeſus Chriſt; he is on all occaſions delighted to find them; whether they be in caves, or monaſteries,—in papal or in any other communion,—in great cities, or in the vallies of Piedmont,—in eſtabliſhed churches, or in diſſenting congregations. With him the character is decided, whenever it appears that the conduct is practically influenced by the eſſentials of Chriſtianity; and, hence, he is often induced to make candid and large allowances for trying circumſtances and ſeaſons of darkneſs, corruption, and prejudice.

prejudice.—The Reader is to decide whether he allows too much; but whatever be his deciſion, he will own that his author is remarkably conſcientious in furniſhing him with materials to direct his opinion.

The Editor knows that ſerious perſons of moderation and judgment, of all perſuaſions,—IN the eſtabliſhment and OUT of it,—ſubſcribe to this ſtatement;—but it is not to be expected, that thoſe, who approve of Dr. H.'s methods of eſtimating Chriſtian worth and excellence ſhould agree in the ſame determination. This writer is ſeldom warm or energetic, but when he is exhibiting charges of prelatical uſurpation or encroachment: and one cannot but lament, that not only no candid ingenuity of diſcrimination is diſplayed in ſeparating real from imaginary charges, but even common hiſtorical and argumentative juſtice is continually violated by this peremptory judge. Before his tribunal a biſhop or dignitary of any kind has little chance of acquittal: Even the veracity of the venerable Cyprian is ſuſpected, though he ſpeak moſt explicitly and poſitively to particular facts. In eccleſiaſtical matters the exerciſe of any ſort of authority, not immediately derived from the multitude, ſeems to be among the greateſt crimes a man can commit, whether he be an emperor or a prelate. The commiſſion of this crime inſtantly converts virtues into vices: The mildeſt government becomes oppreſſion or tyranny; and the moſt exemplary piety is accuſed of fraud, hypocriſy and bigotry. The moſt reſpectable ancient hiſtorians, when they contradict theſe views, are diſmiſſed not only without ceremony, but with unſpeakable contempt; and the moſt valuable compoſitions in divinity, becauſe not dreſſed in a

modern garb, or becauſe tinctured with ſome weakneſſes of the times, are treated with a mercileſs and indecent criticiſm, which often betrays want of information in the higheſt degree.—Aſtoniſhment * is frequently expreſſed that others ſhould be of a contrary ſentiment: but, generally, and almoſt univerſally, little or no reaſon is given for the opinion.—Inſtances we have without number of pert and ſummary deciſion;—none of inſtructive and ſatisfactory diſcuſſion.

The rules, by which Dr. H. appears to judge of evidences and of characters, ſeem to be all reverſed when

* Dr. H. is wonderfully apt to be aſtoniſhed, and ſometimes ſhocked, when he ſpeaks of thoſe who preſume to differ from his ſentiments, not only on Church Government, but even on the doctrines of Chriſtianity.

Mr. Milner, in Vol. ii. p. 506, of his Church Hiſtory, ſays, "The notion of particular redemption was unknown to the ancients; and I wiſh it had remained equally unknown to the moderns."

Dr. Haweis on this occaſion, in Vol. ii. p. 18, of his Impartial hiſtory, expreſſes himſelf "ſhocked that the Scriptures of truth ſhould be treated thus ſlightly; or the greateſt and beſt of men be laid under ſo unbecoming a cenſure."—But he does not inform his reader that Mr. M. in the very page quoted by Dr. H. refers to the Scriptures of truth in proof of his poſition. 1 Tim. ii.

In which Chapter are theſe words:

——— "Of God our Saviour, who will have ALL men to be ſaved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus, Who gave himſelf a ranſom for ALL."

One would think that any plain man might be allowed to infer from this "Scripture of truth," that Chriſt died for ALL without ſhocking the niceſt feelings.

So very different a ſpirit pervades the hiſtories of Dr. H. and of Mr. M. that the Editor is much inclined to believe that the Authors did not agree ſo nearly in their practical principles as Dr. H. ſeems to think.—In one place he ſays, "I am ſorry to differ from a man I revere, and with whom I am generally one in ſentiment and heart," p. 351. Vol. i.—And in ſeveral places he uſes expreſſions of ſimilar import.

when democratical and turbulent ſchiſmatics are to be defended: nor does it follow that he is, therefore, to be inſtantly accuſed of inconſiſtency or contradiction.—It ſhould be recollected, that if Chriſtian excellencies be ſullied and debaſed by an eſteem for eccleſiaſtical order, authority, and eſtabliſhment, they will, probably, be embelliſhed and exalted by the oppoſite diſpoſition. The ſame ſpirit, which renders a man exceſſively and even abſurdly jealous of admitting evidence in favour of an accuſed dignitary, is likely enough to produce extreme candour and abundant credulity in ſupport of factious ſectarians.—The judge has not changed his ſentiments: he has different characters before him: In one caſe, he is inclined to doubt,—to ſuſpect,—and to trample on authentic records, becauſe he knows beforehand the man is guilty of the unpardonable ſin of ſupporting Church Government: In the other, he feels himſelf authorized to hope,—conjecture,—go any lengths, againſt probabilities, in mitigation of vice; for the man has a virtue that compenſates all defects;—he owns no authority but what is derived from the congregations; and theſe may ſplit and ſeparate into endleſs factions, and each of them elect its own RESPECTABLE biſhop.

According to this plan a man has only, firſt to obtain the conſent of a few diſcontented members of a congregation, and then to procure ordination by ſome weak, irregular, or immoral biſhop, who perhaps arrived at the Epiſcopal dignity in a ſimilar way; and he becomes at once a biſhop truly choſen and ordained.

§ 5. With ſuch a writer there can be no place for argumentative controverſy: Arguments are miſplaced, either where the mind is not in the habit of reaſoning, or where there is a want of agreement on fundamental principles.

On

On which accounts the Editor of the ſecond edition of this firſt volume of Mr. M.'s hiſtory was diſpoſed to have taken no notice whatever of Dr. H.'s publication; fully perſuaded, that ſuch a book is not calculated to produce rational conviction; and alſo, that thoſe, who have already embraced the wild theories and ſentiments of the author, will not liſten to diſpaſſionate argumentation. He was diſpoſed to have entirely omitted theſe cautionary obſervations, if his friends had not admoniſhed him, that, notwithſtanding Dr. H.'s compoſition is rendered leſs effective and leſs dangerous in its operation by the preſence of the many obvious and offenſive ingredients which ſuggeſted theſe remarks, yet it does not, in all caſes, carry along with it its own antidote; and, that there is ſtill a way left in which it may do eſſential miſchief.

On this head he proceeds to explain himſelf as briefly as poſſible.

He underſtands, that he is called upon by the lovers of honeſty and good faith in literary concerns to warn the minds of ingenuous ſearchers after truth, not to give implicit credit to the accuracy of Dr. H.'s quotations.—It is not his way to refer the reader much to chapters and pages of authentic documents; he has, however, frequently quoted the writings of the late Mr. M.

—Mr. M. was a firm believer in the propriety and the utility of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments; and he has been thought, in the opinion of reſpectable judges, to have ſhewn himſelf an able defender of his belief.—This ſubject is a tender point with Dr. H. and he will not deny, that he has it much at heart to overturn whatever oppoſes itſelf to his views of the truth in this matter.—In his zeal to ſurmount obſtacles, and to arrive at his beloved concluſions, he has, in his quotations from

from Mr. M., MOST GROSSLY misrepreſented the meaning of that author.

The polite cuſtoms of the times will not permit the writer of this Preface to uſe the words which are preciſely ſuited to the circumſtances of this caſe;—he muſt, therefore, content himſelf with ſubmitting to the candid and liberal feelings of every intelligent reader, who will take the trouble to compare a few examples of the quotations in queſtion with their originals, whether they are not among the moſt unwarrantable and daring inſtances of miſrepreſentation that ever exiſted.

§ 6. In page 352. Vol. i. Dr. H. has theſe words. —What he takes for granted in the firſt ſentence, I can by no means admit, that "becauſe the "Goſpel is of divine authority, and ought to be "received, that every rejection of its doctrines is "as juſt a cauſe for condemnation and human "penalties, as murder or theft."

Of courſe every one will underſtand the lines marked with inverted commas to be the preciſe words uſed by Mr. M.—Now, they not only are not his words, but they convey a meaning perfectly inconſiſtent with the ſentence which they pretend to repreſent.—That ſentence conſiſts of two clauſes.—Of which the former, in Mr. M.'s ſecond volume* ſtands thus; "that the Goſpel is of divine authority, and ought to be received, on pain of condemnation, by every one, who has the opportunity of hearing it fairly propoſed,"—. The Author is evidently ſpeaking of condemnation, NOW ALREADY BEFORE GOD, with a certain proſpect of ultimate condemnation if the unbelief be perſiſted in;—and not of condemnation before any human tribunal.—The paſſage itſelf in queſtion, the paragraph in which it is found, the

* Page 225.

the text* of Scripture quoted in ſupport and in explanation of the doctrine inſiſted on, as well as the whole Eſſay which contains them;—all theſe things fix this meaning with the moſt demonſtrative preciſion.—The latter clauſe of Mr. M.'s ſentence is expreſſed in theſe words,—"and that a man ought no more to plead the pretences of conſcience for rejecting its fundamentals, than for the commiſſion of murder, theft, or any other criminal action."

—Here it is very clearly affirmed, that no pretences of conſcience are to be admitted in excuſe of the great guilt incurred by rejecting the fundamentals of Chriſtianity; but, there is not a ſingle word ſaid, reſpecting the puniſhment of that guilt by any human penalties.—The caſes of murder and theft are introduced, becauſe no man denies the commiſſion of them to be great crimes; whereas men are ſlow and backward in acknowledging the GREATNESS of the ſin of infidelity.

The Author reſts his proof on the poſitive declarations of Scripture: and he thinks that if, as a previous ſtep, men could be convinced and would bear in memory, that any pretences of conſcience are as little to be pleaded in favour of infidelity as of murder or theft, ſome of the moſt ſpecious objections to eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments would be overturned ‡.

Mr. M.'s argument is ſtated, explained, and ſummed† up by himſelf in the cleareſt and moſt concluſive manner.

"The Goſpel is of divine authority and ought to be received on pain of condemnation, by"——

In ſupport of this poſition, he quotes the Scripture already mention from St. John:—And then he

* He that believeth not the Son ſhall not ſee life but the wrath of God abideth on him. John iii. 36.

† Page ~~327~~ 326 ‡ Mr. M. p. 226. Vol. ii.

he infers, that, becauſe the rejection of the Goſpel implies ſo much wickedneſs of heart that the wrath of God is declared to abide on him who believeth not the Son, it is the DUTY of the ſupreme power to conſult the good of the community by eſtabliſhing the revealed religion*.—

The eſtabliſhment and ſupport of the true religion by the ſtate is the important object, which the Author has in view.—In regard to the reſtraint and puniſhment of the propagators of irreligious opinions†,—he owns, that there are difficulties on that ſubject; and he certainly did not go ſo far as Dr. H. does, who aſks why atheiſm ſhould not be tolerated ‡?

How widely different from this is Dr. H.'s repreſentation of the matter!—According to him, Mr. M.'s words are, "every rejection of its doctrines is as juſt a cauſe for condemnation and human penalties, as murder and theft."

Mr. M. does not uſe the expreſſion EVERY REJECTION at all; nor can a ſentence be produced from any of his writings, to prove what Dr. H. inſinuates him to mean by this groſs miſrepreſentation.—Further, when Mr. M. ſays, "the Goſpel is of divine authority and ought to be received, on pain of condemnation, by"——, the expreſſion is perfectly intelligible to every reader, —but Dr. H. omits entirely, in the firſt clauſe of the ſentence which he has quoted, the words "on pain of condemnation;" and introduces into the latter clauſe the words "as juſt a cauſe of condemnation:" —and not content with ſuch an inexcuſable tranſpoſition and mutilation, he alſo abſolutely INSERTS the words, "human penalties" without the leaſt foundation or warrant;—but, not without effect; for theſe words do certainly ſuperadd to Mr. M.'s ſentiments

* Mr. M. Vol. ii. p. 227. † See p. 232.
‡ See Dr. H. Vol. i. p. 367.

ſentiments the meaning, which Dr. H. aſcribes to the whole paſſage.—Mr. M. does not uſe thoſe words in the paſſage alluded to, nor any where near it; yet they are not only placed among the inverted commas as if they originated with him, but afterwards Dr. H. refers to Mr. M.*, and puts the words pains and penalties in italics, with the words EXPEDIENCY, UTILITY, and RIGHT alſo in italics; but let the aſtoniſhed reader know that though theſe laſt words are in the page referred to, the two former are not.

§ 7. Again,—Dr. H. in Vol. i.† of his hiſtory of the Church, has the following ſentence, "If the Supreme Power has no right, page 232, to violate liberty of conſcience;" then it can have no right to "eſtabliſh *true religion*, by poſitive inſtitutions," unleſs, &c.—In this place Dr. H. is referring to Mr. M.'s 2d Vol. p. 232, and the reader is to ſuppoſe that the words marked with inverted commas are taken fairly from that volume, according to the reference.—Whereas, whoever turns to the above-mentioned page 232, of Mr. M.'s ſecond Volume, will find his words to be, "The Supreme power has no right to violate liberty of conſcience by extorting confeſſions of faith."—which is a propoſition very different, both in meaning and in extent, from what Dr. H. repreſents it to be, by ſhamefully ſuppreſſing the latter clauſe of the ſentence.

§ 8. Another inſtance of the ſame nature with the laſt, may be ſelected from p. 360 of the ſame volume. He accuſes Mr. M. of ſaying‡, that "in matters of ſubordinate conſequence, which are evidently

* Page 226. Vol. ii. † Page 359.
‡ Mr. M. p. 233. Vol. ii.

dently not eſſential to Chriſtianity, the civil magiſtrate ought not to interfere at all."

The real words of Mr. M. are, " it would ſoon be agreed, that in matters of ſubordinate conſequence, which are evidently not eſſential to Chriſtianity, the civil magiſtrate ought not to interfere at all, by reſtraining or puniſhing ſuch perſons as differ from the eſtabliſhment, but that he ſhould ſuffer them to enjoy a complete toleration, and to ſerve God in their own way."—" Not to interfere at all,"—with a period after the word ALL;—and not to interfere at all, by reſtraining &c. are expreſſions nearly as different in their meaning, as the following; Dr. H. has hardly quoted a ſingle ſentence from Mr. M.—. and Dr. H. has hardly quoted a ſingle ſentence from Mr. M., FAITHFULLY.

§ 9. In page 357, Dr. H. addreſſes Mr. M. in theſe words, You aſk, " May a magiſtrate compel " by pains and penalties to receive a national reli- " gion, and reſtrain others from the exerciſe of his " own judgment*? Would not this encourage per- " ſecution and be a tyranny over the conſciences of " men?"—And why, continues Dr. H. evade anſwering, clearly and diſtinctly, your own queſtions?

By this quotation, connected with Dr. H.'s accuſation of evaſion, the Reader is led to conclude that Mr. M. maintained a doctrine of compulſion in religious concerns, than which nothing can be more repugnant to his real ſentiments.

In ſeveral places he expreſſes himſelf on this head with the utmoſt preciſion.—Among others, in

* The expreſſion " reſtrain others from the exerciſe of HIS own judgment," ſounds oddly;—nor are theſe the words of Mr. M., notwithſtanding the inverted commas.—The writer of theſe animadverſions, however, would in no caſe be underſtood to cavil at any ſlight and obvious miſtake, either in quotation or in grammar, which did not affect the ſenſe materially.

in his ſecond volume *, immediately after the paſſage mutilated by Dr. H., he has theſe remarkable words: "I endeavour to ſeparate what is certain and important in this matter from what is doubtful and of leſs moment. I ſay without the leaſt heſitation, Let no man be compelled to be a Chriſtian; in ſtrict truth, he cannot. Every man not only ought to have, but muſt have the right of private judgment."—And a little after he adds, "It is contrary to duty that men ſhould be forced to profeſs what they do not believe, becauſe hypocriſy will be the certain, and an augmented enmity, the probable conſequence."—In regard to the paſſage itſelf, it is altered in ſeveral reſpects from Mr. M.'s expreſſions; and, moreover, there is again an actual interpolation of the words PAINS and PENALTIES.—Thus by leaving out ſome words,—by inſerting others,—by totally ſuppreſſing a moſt important part of the author's anſwer to the queſtions,—and by accuſing him of evaſion, Dr. H. inſinuates, to the Reader's mind, ſentiments the very oppoſite to thoſe, which Mr. M.'s two pages are calculated to impreſs: He inſinuates, that Mr. M. really thought,—though he might judge it inexpedient to ſpeak out,—that in religious concerns the magiſtrate had a right to reſtrain the ſubject from the exerciſe of his own judgment by pains and penalties, and to compel him to receive the national religion in ſuch a way as to hurt his conſcience.—It is true Mr. M. does not pretend to ſatisfy completely every enquiry that may be imagined in this difficult ſubject: He explains clearly how far he can go;—and if he do not go the full length, which Dr. H. thinks he ought to do, that will be a very inſufficient reaſon for telling the public, that he has really ſaid things, which he never did ſay.

But

* P. 231.

But, doubtleſs, in future, Dr. H.'s evidences, —his inverted commas—will be croſs examined very cloſely by all perſons who, ſhall read this Preface.

§ 10. The laſt inſtances of this odious ſort of perverſion,—the laſt, which the Editor means to notice, but by no means the laſt of the many, which deſerve ſevere animadverſion,—are to be found in page 370 of Dr. H.'s firſt volume:—Where he ſays,—Mr. M. ſuppoſes*,—"That without a ſtate-eſtabliſhment there would be no religion among us."—Let not the Reader forget the inverted commas; and then let him peruſe the place referred to by Dr. H.—Mr. M.'s words are, "Without an eſtabliſhment provided by the ſtate, the greater part will ſcarce have any religion at all; wickedneſs will be practiſed on the boldeſt ſcale; and, if the form of government have a large portion of liberty in its texture, the manners will be egregiouſly diſſolute."

§ 11. In the ſame 370th page, Dr. H. ſays, "If bigotry can dwell in ſuch minds as Mr. Milner's, what may we not expect from other men? Why ſhould *God ſet his face againſt every government, which does not fence religion with penal ſanctions.*"—The letters here printed in Italics are alſo in Italics in Dr. H.'s book; but the reader, who turns to the bottom of Mr. M.'s 240th page, will perceive that Dr. H.'s Italics are as little diſpoſed to obſerve the rules of veracity as his inverted commas.—Mr. M.'s expreſſion is, "Even if the government were, in other reſpects, the ſoundeſt and the wiſeſt effort of human ſagacity, it will probably prove only a curſe to its citizens, unleſs ſome legal proviſion be

* Page 240.

be made for religion.—God himſelf, there is the higheſt reaſon to conclude, WILL SET HIS FACE AGAINST IT, and confound it."

Let this ſentence be compared with Dr. H.'s repreſentation of it.

§ 12. Since the above was written, a judicious friend of the Editor, who had read Dr. H.'s firſt diſſertation, ſuggeſted, that the 378th page of his firſt volume ought by no means to paſs unnoticed.—Perhaps, in no page ever yet printed was there ſo much miſrepreſentation crowded together.

Dr. H. ſays, I truſt I have now proved, — — " that the propoſitions you ſet out with, (meaning " Mr. M.) are utterly unfounded, and the very " reverſe of them, truth." — He then proceeds to make his readers underſtand what were Mr. M.'s propoſitions, which, he ſays, are the reverſe of the truth.—" That Theodoſius had *no* right to " make his religion, that of the ſtate univerſally, " with pains and penalties on the diſſenters from " his impoſitions.—That every man in this matter " is to be left to his own conſcience, undiſturbed, " as long as he is a peaceable ſubject.—That it is " an unwarranted violation of the right of private " judgment to impoſe religious ſentiments on the " ſubjects of any government with pains and pe- " nalties for non-conformity; and that, there- " fore, Theodoſius, and all others who have acted " like him, are chargeable with a criminal abuſe " of authority."

The word NO is in Italics: all the reſt of the propoſitions are marked with inverted commas; and, it is impoſſible that the reader ſhould make any other inference than that they are Mr. M.'s very words, with the ſingle exception of the word NO.

It

It is really painful to remark, that this whole repreſentation is contrary to truth, both as it reſpects the words and their meaning.

§ 13. The Editor of this Volume of Mr. M.'s hiſtory, wiſhes it moſt explicitly to be underſtood that, in printing theſe animadverſions, his object is not, in the ſmalleſt degree, either to confute the dangerous and impracticable notions of Dr. H., or to defend what he conceives to be the conſtitutional and Scriptural ſyſtem of Mr. M.—The latter taſk has already been executed frequently by the ableſt writers:—In regard to the former, he feels as little inclined to attempt it as he would be to undertake a confutation of the Jacobinical principles of the preſent day;—to which indeed the fundamental maxims of Dr. H., in eccleſiaſtical matters, ſeem but too nearly allied.

When a Clergyman of the Church of England can ſo far forget the dictates of plain ſenſe, and the duties of his ſacred profeſſion, as to aſk the queſtion, why atheiſm ſhould not be tolerated *, the Editor makes no ſcruple to own, that ſo MARKED a circumſtance, even if it ſtood ſingle, would to him be a ſufficient admonition not to loſe time in fruitleſs controverſy with that Clergyman concerning eccleſiaſtical polity, or eccleſiaſtical toleration. He may hope, by theſe few pages of animadverſion to ſtop the practice of poſitive miſquotation; but not, by a volume, to correct inveterate habits of miſrepreſentation, or determined prejudices againſt all kind of reſtraint in the diſſemination of opinions. Mr. M. with great judgment and knowledge of human nature, obſerves, "I do not think it ſufficient to ſay, the truth will take care of itſelf: The unlearned and the

* Dr. H. Vol. i. p. 367.

the unwary ought not to be expoſed to the miſchievous effects of ſuch publications*."—No man had a greater regard for ſober and rational liberty: but he reflected with ſorrow; that the children of this world are often in their generation not only wiſer than the children of light†, but alſo more active and induſtrious:—He ſaw that the wicked and deſigning laid ſucceſsful ſnares for young, inexperienced and artleſs minds, and that the enemy was aſſiduous in ſowing tares,—from the pulpit,—from the preſs,—and in converſation; whilſt thoſe, who were commiſſioned to watch, were frequently either aſleep, or neglectful, or even maintaining that the adverſary had a natural right to do all the miſchief he could.—But, however deſperate may appear the cure of certain diſeaſed individuals, it will not thence follow that we ought not to warn the public of the contagious nature of the malady. For, the romantic and viſionary theories of modern diſcontented demagogues, reſpecting the authority of the multitude or of majorities,—particularly, when the ſeditious and inflammatory dreſs, in which they are often preſented to the public eye, is taken into the account,—ought, really, both in civil and in religious concerns, to be conſidered as the irrational, infectious, productions of diſtempered intellect. A CONFUTATION of them is by far too reſpectable a term: They are to be expoſed: Their miſchievous tendency is to be exhibited: The public caution is to be excited. A contagion is ſpreading; and ſalutary preventives are called for.—On ſuch occaſions recourſe ſhould be had to the very beſt expedients for preſerving the intellectual health of the community; and in this view, perhaps, no expedient will be found more effectual than to direct the labours

* Milner's Hiſtory, Vol. ii. p. 234.
† Luke xvi. 8.

labours of the cloſet to the detection of the deteſtable arts of poſitive and unequivocal miſrepreſentation;—which, in ſeaſons of this kind, abound much more than is uſually imagined.—This expedient, as it is moſt honourable in its principle, and powerful in its operative conſequences, will have large claims on the gratitude of the public, who, doubtleſs, in future will mark the preſumptuous zealots, who have impoſed on their credulity: and, ſurely, it may alſo be added, that this ſame expedient will be moſt likely to reclaim young proſelytes in Jacobiniſm, whether in civil or in religious politics, when they have been inſtructed to perceive that their judgments were warped, or their paſſions heated by abſolute impoſitions.

§ 14. It is not without deſign, that the Editor, in the preceding paragraph, uſes the words poſitive and unequivocal miſrepreſentation;—for firſt, they are the mildeſt and the leaſt offenſive terms, that occur to him, to denote the criminality of a writer, who dares to miſquote his adverſary, both in the words, and in the meaning of particular ſentences:—And, ſecondly, they diſtinguiſh the ſingle, well-defined offence of quoting expreſsly words, which were never ſo uſed, either literally or ſubſtantially, from all others, which may be included under the vague and general term of miſrepreſentation.—It is miſrepreſentation in this preciſe way and degree, that forms the complaint of the Editor.

§ 15. The diſtinction between the two ſpecies of miſrepreſentation is important, and ought to be well impreſſed on the memory.

In vague and general miſrepreſentations of perſons or things a reader of any caution or experience,

before he ſurrenders his aſſent, reflects whether the reaſons adduced by his author, juſtify the ſtrong concluſions he has drawn; and if they be found deficient for the purpoſe, he, at leaſt, ſuſpends his judgment,—and, perhaps, harbours ſuſpicions of heat, of party or of prejudice, which lead to a nicer inveſtigation of the truth:—But when the miſrepreſentation is ſpecific, and poſitive; as, for example, when it is affirmed that an adverſary has uſed certain individual words, or, that he has advanced a particular determinate propoſition; and theſe aſſertions prove not to be true, there are few readers indeed who may not be impoſed on by ſuch controverſial intrepidity as this; there are few indeed, who will ſuſpect, that ſuch poſitive declarations do really conceal and imply a want of veracity.

In this way much error and deluſion may be propagated without ſuſpicion; and much miſchief done before detection can take place: Few people will take the trouble to look at originals, ſo long as it is thought impoſſible that they ſhould be miſtated.—Thus, many proſelytes may owe their converſion to proceedings of this ſort; and men may become vehement advocates, or intemperate opponents all their lives after; and they may die without ever knowing that the magic ſentences, which firſt biaſſed their judgments, or inflamed their paſſions, were, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, poſitive and unequivocal miſrepreſentations.

§ 16. The force of the Editor's accuſation conſiſts in this, that whenever ſentences or paragraphs are produced from any writer in the way in which Dr. H. has produced them from Mr. M., the Reader expects that the lines marked with inverted commas ſhould be preciſely the words, which are uſed in the place referred to.

—It

—It is a very inſufficient defence of miſquotation to urge, that the MEANING of the paſſages will, on examination, be found ſubſtantially the ſame; and it is no defence at all to endeavour to ſhew that ſuch MUST be an author's meaning from his context, or from other parts of his writings.—This laſt is a very good rule in the interpretation of ambiguous or miſconſtrued paſſages; when, to find out and fix ſome meaning is the declared object of the writer; but it is totally inadmiſſible in direct and poſitive citations.—In theſe, the very words ſhould be ſtrictly adhered to; as it is no uncommon thing for ſentences or paragraphs, which on the firſt reading were thought intelligible and plain, to become doubtful and obſcure, by being conſtrued differently by different perſons, and even by the ſame perſons at different times.—By theſe and ſimilar reaſons, the Editor is convinced that his friends reaſoned wiſely in adviſing him to place upon its true footing the credit and reputation of Dr. H. as a controverſial writer.—On no foundation whatever, ſolid or ſandy, can he build an excuſe for his miſquotations.—They are not the words of the author: They are not the meaning of the ſentences in point: Nor, laſtly, are they the author's general ſentiments;—though if they were,—that circumſtance would be no apology for erroneous citations.

This charge is the heavier, becauſe the ſubject is important,—the publication recent—and Dr. H. made the attack.

§ 17. In the opinion of the Editor Dr. H.'s book abounds with GROSS miſrepreſentations of the GENERAL and indeterminate ſpecies, as well as with thoſe which have been called poſitive and unequivocal, becauſe limited to the particular words

and meanings as quoted from authors; but he by no means indulges the vain hope that any thing he could urge would produce in that writer's mind a conviction either of intemperate expreſſion or of erroneous judgment.—There are no ſcales or meaſures to adjuſt and ſettle ſuch queſtions as theſe: and as nothing but ſcales or meaſures can be effective, where there is not ſomething of a diſpaſſionate ſpirit, which inveſtigates prudently, concedes candidly, and determines impartially, the diſputed poſitions would, doubtleſs, remain exactly where they were, as far as Dr. H. and Mr. M. and the Editor are concerned.

Dr. H. would ſtill truſt that he had left them "no longer involved in difficulties*:" and the Editor would expect to hear the ſame clamour and outcry concerning perſecution and the right of private judgment: In all ſuch caſes, therefore, it muſt be left to a judicious public to decide from the reſpective characters of the authors, and from a collective view of their performances,—who has moſt deſerved their praiſe,—who has moſt laboured in the cauſe of truth and piety,—who has moſt diſplayed the mild tempers and graces of the Chriſtian;—and laſtly, who has taken by the hand the diligent enquiring ſtudent, and conducted him through thorny and pathleſs regions with honeſty, ability, and diſcretion; and who has bewildered and confounded the ſame, by deſpiſing faithful guides, encouraging raſh projects, and furniſhing treacherous information.

The Editor is well aware that miſrepreſentations, in the looſe, indeterminate and extended uſe of that term, are both hard to avoid and hard to prove: Charges alſo of this nature are eaſily made, and eaſily defended: on all ſides there

* See Dr. H.'s Vol. i. p. 378.

there is plenty of room for dexterity and evaſion; ſo that often there will be no end of controverſy. Habits, tempers, education, prejudices, keep even the moſt able and moſt ingenuous minds at a diſtance and in oppoſition: In ſpite of argument or remonſtrance, men continue to exaggerate, to miſconceive, and to miſtake.

§ 18. As the writer of theſe animadverſions has poſitively aſſerted that Dr. H.'s volumes, beſides the miſquotations, abound alſo,—not only with venial or unavoidable errors,—but with GROSS miſrepreſentations of the indeterminate kind; that is, where the ſenſe of an author is perverted, though there be no ſpecific miſtatement of his words, he will, in confirmation of that general cenſure, as well as in further explanation of the diſtinction between the different ſorts of miſrepreſentation, ſolicit the reader's attention for a ſingle moment to a remarkable inſtance in point.—Dr. H. in the beginning of his firſt diſſertation, ſpeaks of the emperor Theodoſius in the following terms:—He "reſolved to reduce his Chriſtian ſubjects to uniformity with his own opinions, which he preſumed to be thoſe of the Scriptures. Inſtead of union in the one head Chriſt, held in mutual charity and forbearance, he determined to cut and ſquare religion according to his own model, and by penal laws, to compel ſubmiſſion to the eſtabliſhment which he formed. Mr. Milner undertakes to defend the propriety of this conduct."—Now let us hear Mr. M. from the bottom of page 197, Vol. ii. to the middle of page 198.—"Theodoſius, earneſtly deſirous to reduce all, who profeſſed the Chriſtian name to an uniformity, once more attempted to unite them by a conference at Conſtantinople: But where the heart was not the

the ſame, it appeared that outward conformity produced only hypocriſy. The Novatians alone agreed cordially with the general Church in ſentiment."—

——— "In conſequence of this, theſe diſſenters obtained from the emperor as ample a toleration as could reaſonably be deſired. Heavy and tyrannical penalties were denounced in edicts againſt the reſt, which, however, do not appear to have been executed. The denunciation of them itſelf was, therefore, wrong, though it muſt be owned it proceeded from the beſt intentions on the ſide of Theodoſius, who actually put none of his penal laws againſt ſectaries into execution, and meant only to induce all men to ſpeak alike in the Church. How much better, to have taken pains in promoting the propagation of the Goſpel itſelf by the encouragement of zealous paſtors, and to have given up the zeal for a chimera of no value—a pretended union without the reality"—!

Mr. M. in this paſſage, clearly expreſſes an opinion, that the penal laws of Theodoſius againſt ſectaries, proceeded from the beſt intentions on the part of the emperor; and that he meant only to induce all men to ſpeak alike; and he adds, as a fact, that he actually put none of thoſe laws into execution.—In this ſame paſſage alſo, with equal clearneſs, Mr. M. pronounces theſe very penalties, or penal edicts, HEAVY and TYRANNICAL; and adds, that the denunciation of them itſelf was therefore wrong; and that it would have been much better to have taken pains in promoting the Goſpel, and to have given up the zeal for a chimera of no value.—Did Dr. H. miſtake Mr. M.'s candid interpretation of the MOTIVES of the emperor for a DEFENCE of his conduct? Or, rather,—Is it not utterly unaccountable that he ſhould repreſent Mr. M.

as

as a defender of that very conduct, which he has marked in the moſt pointed terms of diſapprobation?—And the more ſo as Dr. H.*, by quoting the very page, proves that he had read the paſſages.

§ 19. After what has been ſaid, it is ſcarcely neceſſary to aſſure the Reader, that by bringing together into view theſe two paragraphs from their reſpective authors, the Editor does not, in the ſlighteſt degree, mean to call in queſtion the complete right of Dr. H. to deliver his own ſentiments freely.—If HE think that Theodoſius did wrong, and that Mr. M. approved his conduct, by all means let him ſay ſo. The writer of this preface will never complain on ſuch an account.—Indeed he claims to himſelf a ſimilar privilege, and he freely exerciſes it in this preface by warning the public of the danger of receiving implicitly the determinations of Dr. H. in eccleſiaſtical hiſtory; and, therefore, it would be inconſiſtent in him to encroach at all upon Dr. H.'s equal right to cenſure, applaud, and repreſent the ſentiments of others, according to the ſuggeſtions of his own judgment or fancy. Let Dr. H., then, expreſs as much aſtoniſhment, and as often as he pleaſes, at the opinions of Mr. M.: Let him take advantage of the democratical and profane turn of the preſent day; and deſcribe that hiſtorian as bigoted and ſuperſtitious, and as a ſupporter of paſſive obedience and of high church principles; ſtill,—all this with the Editor would be no proper ground of complaint: he would place it all to the ſcore of partiality and prejudice and diſcontent; and would never judge theſe cautionary animadverſions either neceſſary or expedient.—His complaint

* See Dr. H. Vol. i. p. 359. Dr. H. quotes Mr. M's. 198th page, vol II. and as uſual, miſrepreſents him exceedingly.

complaint commences preciſely when Dr. H. begins to miſquote: when Dr. H. informs the public that his literary adverſary has written ſentences which he did not write: when Dr. H. impoſes on the credulity of his readers, by ſo altering or mutilating particular paſſages of Mr. M.'s hiſtory as to produce meanings different from the real ones, and ſometimes oppoſite to them.—A partial and a prejudiced judge may be endured,—but, if that judge ſhould become alſo a witneſs, the ſmalleſt deviation from the ſacred duty excites alarm and indignation.

§ 20. This laſt inſtance from Dr. H.'s hiſtory, reſpecting Theodoſius' treatment of his Chriſtian ſubjects, is extremely well adapted to illuſtrate the Editor's important diſtinction between the two ſorts of miſrepreſentation: and it is not improbable but that the friends of Dr. H. may conceive the Editor himſelf, in the following ſtatement, to be guilty of the ſame fault.—Let the public decide.

For, the Writer of theſe animadverſions, by the incontrovertible facts, which he has produced, certainly feels himſelf juſtified in now ſubmitting to the careful and ſtudious reader a ſummary view of the principles and practice of Dr. H. in the conduct of his Impartial hiſtory.—That work appears to him to be written in the ſpirit of party and of temporal views.—He thinks, that the author, in his judgment of the characters of princes or dignitaries, is, in general, very little influenced by the ſoundneſs of their faith, or by their exemplary manners; but rather by their agreement or diſagreement with his own notions of eccleſiaſtical polity: That an exceſſive regard for a wild ſpecies of eccleſiaſtical liberty; a reverence for the authority of congregations and majorities; and a hatred of dignities, and of poſitive inſtitutions greatly

greatly diſturb his underſtanding by perpetually ſuggeſting ideas of many penal laws, reſtraints, puniſhments, fences, fetters, and human penalties, which exiſt in his own imagination; but not in the communities which he attacks: Then, in particular, he thinks, that he has painted the orthodox belief and honeſt ardour of the emperor Theodoſius in the moſt unfeeling, indiſcriminate, and unwarrantable language: That he has written nauſeous and diſguſting encomiums on the lenity of Julian the apoſtate: That he has reviled with illiberal contempt, and with blind, preſumptuous invective the pious memories of ſome of the moſt excellent primitive fathers: That, beſides many palpable miſquotations from the late Mr. M., he has often miſrepreſented his GENERAL ſenſe and meaning in the groſſeſt manner;—and laſtly,—That he appears conſtantly to confound a zeal for a free and open eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment with a zeal for a compulſory and inſincere uniformity—A very ſingular and a very productive error!

§ 21. Such are the moſt deliberate ſentiments of the Editor.—But, at the ſame time that he both maintains the above ſtatement to be faithful in itſelf, and foreſees that it will be pronounced ſo, upon trial, by every impartial reader, he not only admits that it ought not, but he expects that it will not, be received by a cautious public without reſerve and further enquiry.—The certainty of ſuch reſerve being uſed, and of ſuch enquiry being made, entirely falls in with his ideas of all general repreſentations and criticiſms of this kind, however deciſive and peremptory the terms may be in which they are expreſſed: There is, therefore, no danger of the public being miſled by them: They will examine, whether the Editor has not himſelf been

been guilty of miſrepreſentation in what he calls a faithful ſtatement: nor will any careful reader condemn Dr. H. before he has peruſed the neceſſary pages:—NOT ſo,—when Dr. H. poſitively and unequivocally quotes a paſſage from Mr. M. which is not in his book. Thouſands of readers may THEN draw practical inferences from ſuch imaginary paſſages without the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of fallacy: the greatneſs of this literary crime becomes the ſecurity for its commiſſion; and even Dr. H. himſelf, if he ſhould, in future, ſincerely repent of the practice, may not have it in his power to reclaim his deluded readers.—Let this ſpecies of miſrepreſentation, therefore, be always expoſed and chaſtiſed:—It is done with little trouble: There can be no diſpute about it; and yet the effects may be extenſive, ſalutary and permanent:—For, though it be true, that readers are, in general, much diſpoſed to give credit to the ſpecific and poſitive quotations of authors, without further examination, it does not hence follow, that when a practice of this nature is once detected, the literary puniſhment ſhould not be exceedingly heavy: Reputation once loſt in this way is hard to be regained;—all a man's aſſertions in future are received with a jealous ſcrupuloſity:—and, perhaps, he may frequently be diſbelieved even when he ſpeaks the truth.

When Dr. H.'s late performance was firſt put into the hands of the Editor of the ſecond edition of Mr. M.'s firſt volume, he had not the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion that it could poſſibly contain any ſuch examples of the fallaciouſneſs of human teſtimony as thoſe which have been mentioned; but he cannot now read a page of that author without experiencing a painful apprehenſion of being miſled by him in one ſhape or another. It is true this conſequent diſtruſt is both the natural puniſhment

of

of a falſe guide, and the beſt protection againſt his future impoſitions; and, therefore, the wiſdom and expediency of ſuch a proviſion in the conſtitution of man is exceedingly ſtriking;—the neceſſity of it, however, affords a mortifying reflection to the mind;—and the more ſo, where men of education,—where Chriſtians,—where the clergy are concerned.

§ 22. By their fruits ye ſhall know them*.—Daily experience convinces us that, where an an uncommon and an oſtentatious profeſſion is made of great love for ſimplicity, liberty, the right of private judgment, &c. very little credit is often to be given to theſe extraordinary and magnificent pretenſions: they are rather, in many caſes, the ſignal for peculiar caution, and watchfulneſs.—An inexperienced controverſialiſt, after reading theſe animadverſions, would hardly ſuppoſe that Dr. H. is the man, who ſhould affect to be panting after greater purity of principle and more apoſtolic manners than are to be found in any exiſting viſible Church of Chriſtians;—or, again, that Dr. H. of all others, ſhould be the man to brand the pious memories of ſuch excellent characters, as Ambroſe, Jerom, and Chryſoſtom, by affirming that "they ſeverally ſtand convicted of a WANT OF TRUTH, that the meaneſt Chriſtian at preſent would bluſh to have laid to his charge, and confounded to have proved upon him†."

The friends and familiars of Dr. H. will, doubtleſs, bluſh for the many inſtances of diſingenuous depravity, which diſgrace his late publication; and truly pious Chriſtians of all denominations will lament that profeſſion and practice ſhould be ſo much at variance.

When

* Matthew, Chap. 7. verſe 20.

† Dr. H. Vol. i. page 336.

§ 23. When the candid reader reflects how much the late Mr. M.'s ſentiments on eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments have been miſrepreſented by the publication in queſtion, the Editor truſts, he will not think it improper in him to ſubjoin, in this place, a compendious ſtatement of the real principles which that induſtrious and careful hiſtorian maintained; and by which he was directed in his eccleſiaſtical reſearches and repreſentations.—This may be done with great brevity, and with very little repetition of what has already been ſaid.

Mr. M. was extremely attached to order and regularity; but he had no improper fondneſs whatever for hierarchy. No man was further removed from bigotry in the moſt comprehenſive meaning of the term;—from the bigotry of popular and democratical faction as well as from that of ſuperſtitious and blind ſubmiſſion to authority: He deteſted perſecution in every ſhape: No propoſition could be more oppoſite to his wiſhes, or more diſtant from his thoughts, than that which Dr. H. aſcribes to him without the ſmalleſt foundation; namely, that every rejection of the doctrine of Chriſtianity is as juſt a cauſe for condemnation and human penalties as murder and theft. He was a fair, and a zealous defender of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments according to Scriptural ideas, and the principles of the Britiſh conſtitution as illuſtrated and developed in the Toleration act: He never contends for uniformity in the ſenſe in which Dr. H. repreſents him to have done*.—If, by uniformity be underſtood the exiſtence of one, and only of one religious eſtabliſhment in an empire, or in the ſame part of an empire, as in England or Scotland, then it is true, and,—in no other ſenſe is it true—that Mr.

* Page 359.

Mr. M. contends for an uniformity. No doubt, he would have rejoiced in a ſincere uniformity under the protection of one eſtabliſhment, if the preſent ſtate of human imperfection could have admitted it; but he was too well acquainted with the corrupt principles and ungovernable paſſions of man to expect ſo much moderation, candour and harmony:—and he always expreſſes his deteſtation of COMPULSION in this matter. "Let no man," ſays he, in the paſſage already referred to*, "be compelled to be a Chriſtian,"—which is going much farther than ſaying, Let no man be compelled to become a member of the eſtabliſhment.—It was no ſatisfaction to him to find that, in any caſe, an increaſe of conformity was purchaſed at the expence of integrity: nor would he allow that, in that way, the Church of England could poſſibly derive any advantage but what was indirect and precarious.—He would not deny, that, perhaps, by ſuch unnatural intruſions, the leſs cautious and leſs diligent members of her communion might be put more on their guard.

This deſcription contains the practical and the theoretical principles of Mr. M. on theſe contentious ſubjects.—The ſubſtance of them may be briefly expreſſed in diſtinct propoſitions;—thus,—The Supreme power has a right and ought to eſtabliſh the true religion by poſitive inſtitutions; but, it has no right to extort confeſſions of faith.—It has alſo a right to reſtrain men from deriding and profaning the ſacred inſtitutions of the country, and from propagating infidelity, idolatry, atheiſm and groſs irreligion of every ſort.—The eſſentials of revealed religion cannot be neglected or deſpiſed without a turpitude of heart, which the Scripture

* Page 32 of theſe animadverſions.

Scripture connects with the final ruin of the ſoul*. —Theſe eſſentials or fundamental articles are few; but they are of immenſe importance and ſhould be carefully ſelected by the legiſlator from ſubordinate truths and circumſtantials: and, laſtly, in all matters of ſubordinate conſequence, which are not evidently eſſential to Chriſtianity, the civil magiſtrate ſhould ſuffer men to enjoy a complete toleration, and to ſerve God in their own way.

Theſe are nearly the very words of Mr. M.; and the moderate and truly Chriſtian ſentiments, which they expreſs, appear in his hiſtory† throughout: The Editor eſpouſes them with as much pointed deciſion as he recoils from Dr. H's. unfounded cenſures and extravagant opinions.

§ 24. IN THE MANAGEMENT of theſe Animadverſions, the writer hopes, that, conſiſtently with ſo much brevity, he has taken the moſt effectual way of guarding the public in general, and the Church of England in particular, from the daring impoſitions of a man, who would ſtill be conſidered as a friend and a brother‡.

He has ſhewn them how to make a proper eſtimate of the credit of this ſame friend and brother by convicting him of poſitive and direct miſtatements of the words and ſentiments of Mr. M.,— the Author, whom he was oppoſing; and he has ſubjoined a brief review of that Author's real opinions.—He has, alſo, warned them explicitly of the groſs partialities and averſions of Dr. H.; and of his numerous miſrepreſentations of the vague and indeterminate kind; and he has expreſsly laid before

* Mr. M. Vol. ii. p. 241.

† See, particularly, Mr. M. Vol. ii. Chap. xvii.

‡ Dr. H. ſays in his introduction, p. ix,— "Having &c.—— been called to miniſter in the Church of England, I have embraced and ſubſcribed her articles *ex animo*, and have continued to prefer an epiſcopal mode of Government; and I am content herein to abide with God, till I can find one more purely apoſtolic."

ſore them one palpable inſtance of this laſt ſort, in the caſe of Theodoſius.—He could eaſily have furniſhed many more examples of a ſimilar nature; but this would have been beſides his purpoſe; and, as he neither expects, nor deſires to be believed on his own bare aſſertion, he confidently refers the cautious reader to Dr. H.'s book itſelf, and requeſts him to compare its contents with Mr. M.'s volumes, and with the authentic documents of ancient hiſtory.

§ 25. It is not to be denied, that expreſſions of commendation of ſome parts of the Engliſh eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions have dropped from the pen of Dr. H.;—but notwithſtanding this, it appears very clear, that, whoever can digeſt his repreſentation of perſons and things in general, muſt ſoon become a weak friend, or a bitter enemy of the Church of England:—and for this reaſon,—becauſe the tendency of his performance, in the main and with very ſlight exceptions, is to leſſen reſpect for that Church, to increaſe diſlikes, prejudices and objections; and to render its rulers odious and contemptible with the moſt indiſcriminating indecency.

The Editor of the ſecond edition of this firſt Volume freely owns, that this laſt conſideration became an additional motive in determining his mind to animadvert upon Dr. H.'s late publication. It is allowed, that, of late years, there has appeared a very manifeſt and deſperate deſign to undermine and ſubvert all reſpect for regular and conſtituted authorities both in Church and State: and this, under the plauſible pretence of regard for natural liberty and the right of private judgment. At ſuch a ſeaſon, he could not be induced to think that a work, ſo replete both with dangerous ſentiment and unfair management, ought to paſs unnoticed.

Dr. H. may continue to profeſs reſpect and reverence for the Church of which he is a member; and far be it from the Editor, even in his own mind, to paſs any ſentence unfavourable to his ſincerity: The Editor only pretends to judge of actions and their tendencies by the rules of common ſenſe and experience; and, on theſe grounds, he has a full perſuaſion, that whatever profeſſions Dr. H. may make, if he continue to ACT as he has done of late, the enemies of the Church of England will not fail to enumerate him as one of their own party;—as one,—who only waits for favourable moments to demoliſh and trample upon the venerable inſtitutions by which he has long been cheriſhed and ſupported, and of which he has ſolemnly and repeatedly declared his expreſs approbation.

§ 26. It has indeed been hinted to the Editor, that he is giving too much importance to a performance ſo ſuperficial and ſo uncandid as that of Dr. H. —But be this as it may;—Be his reaſons, when they are put together and well conſidered, ſatisfactory or not, he is very ſincere in declaring, that though, ultimately and on the whole, he felt a conſiderable preponderancy of argument in favour of the ſtep, which he has taken in writing theſe animadverſions, he did not arrive at that concluſion without conſiderable heſitation.—Weighty objections occurred to his mind; but they were overbalanced.—It will not be neceſſary to deſcribe his feelings on the occaſion;—the moſt material will readily occur to conſiderate perſons.

The greateſt admirers of Dr. H. cannot be more ſolicitous than he has been to diſcover ſome explanation of that Author's conduct, that might be intelligible and probable without having recourſe to the ſuppoſition of more DEFECT OF PRINCIPLE

PRINCIPLE than is implied in mere inadvertency, haſte, prejudice, ſtrong attachment to party, and ſuch like. If the Writer could, conſcientiouſly, have owned that he felt himſelf tolerably ſatisfied on this point, it might have turned the balance the other way, at leaſt for the preſent, and he might have ſpared himſelf this unpleaſant taſk.—He well knows that the common enemies of Chriſtianity rejoice, when thoſe, who ſhould be its ſupporters, have diſputes and contentions among themſelves; or, in any ſhape, act a part inconſiſtent with their profeſſion; and he would not unneceſſarily, afford them occaſions for triumph.—He felt alſo, that there might be ſome danger of indulging feelings inconſiſtent with Chriſtian patience and forbearance; and, there is no petition which he offers up with more ſincerity and fervency, than "Lead us not into temptation."

§ 27. As ſoon as it became his deliberate judgment, that theſe and all other objections ought to be encountered, he reſolved to uſe plainneſs of ſpeech ſuited to the occaſion, and ſimply to deſcribe his own ſentiments without affectation or hypocriſy.—On ſuch occaſions, it is very much the practice of the world to aſſume a great appearance of patient coolneſs and apathy, which ill correſponds both with what is felt in the cloſet, and with the effect intended to be produced; but the writer of theſe animadverſions is no admirer of this practice, nor does he ſee any example of it in Scripture, nor does any particular circumſtance ſuggeſt to him the duty or the propriety of diſguiſing or ſuppreſſing honeſt indignation.—The offence is of a public nature: No ſymptoms of penitence have appeared: The miſchief is operating.

He

He hopes, notwithſtanding, that he has felt no emotions, which have led him to break the Scripture-rule, "Be ye angry and ſin not,"—and he is SURE that he has moſt conſcientiouſly confined himſelf to the points in queſtion, and not ſuffered himſelf to be entangled, drawn aſide, or exaſperated by the conſideration of any extraneous matter whatever.

From Dr. H. himſelf he has not received the ſlighteſt perſonal offence: and he is, alſo, ready to acknowledge, that that author ſpeaks much more reſpectfully of Mr. M., and allows him much greater excellence of character and ability in every point of view than literary adverſaries uſually do, who differ ſo much on any ſubject in which they are much intereſted.

§ 28. A Writer, who, in this plain and deciſive way, accuſes, but not without proof, and cenſures, but not without juſtice and moderation, has a right to be believed when he FURTHER declares that, though the ſuppoſition of inadvertency, of heat of temper, of prejudice and party, of the hope and proſpect of ſecurity on account of Mr. M.'s deceaſe,—in a word, though every ſuppoſition—ſhort of deſign,—and though all the ſuppoſitions, taken together as an aggregate, which he can make, appear to him completely inadequate to the explanation of the conduct of Dr. H.,—ſtill, he cannot bring himſelf ſteadily to abide by the opinion of a wilful intention in that author to deceive, in the degree, which the facts imply.—If this declaration ſhould be thought, in any meaſure, inconſiſtent with other things ſtated in theſe animadverſions, the writer has no objection that the ſuſpicion of contradiction ſhould be explained by the puzzle which has hampered his own mind, whenever he has ſuffered himſelf to reflect on the motives

motives of the conduct in queſtion, and by the ſort of fluctuation of judgment, which is uſually experienced in ſuch diſagreeable and difficult circumſtances.—The diſagreeableneſs and the difficulty of the circumſtances conſiſt in this;—The facts are deciſive; and, as far as they are concerned, they incurably and irrecoverably convict Dr. H. of poſitive and direct miſrepreſentations, and would juſtify much ſtronger language than any which has been uſed in this ſtatement to the public.—Now, though the inference from the facts to the motives ſeems natural and even unavoidable, ſtill, it is with great reluctance that the mind acquieſces in paſſing ſo heavy a cenſure: It looks around with anxiety for ſome way of eſcape that may be leſs diſhonourable; and, though it does not ſucceed, it always has one reſource left;—namely,—to leave the motives with the Searcher of all hearts.—It is, however, not to be diſſembled, that even this reſource, as far as it may be ſuppoſed to have any tendency to mitigate the accuſations againſt Dr. H., is but ſlender and inadequate; and, that it is ſupported rather by the previous improbability of the exiſtence of ſuch diſhonourable motives, than by any want of evidence, or by any imperfection in the reaſoning which connects together actions and their principles.

§ 29. How deceitful is the human heart! And how watchful ought every one to be, who eagerly embarks in a cauſe, which is connected with religion, leſt he ſhould be found ſubſtituting human inventions in the place of the Goſpel of Chriſt; or, leſt he ſhould miſtake his own partialities and attachments for pure brotherly love and Chriſtian affection!—How much is it to be wiſhed, alſo, that all men were more accuſtomed to turn inward the eyes

eyes of their underſtanding in the way of ſelf-examination!—They would then, both have leſs time to ſcrutinize the defects of others, and alſo be more diſpoſed to interpret thoſe defects with candour and equity!—In the holy Scriptures men are exhorted to try the ſpirit and temper of profeſſors of Chriſtianity, whether they be really of God; and, on this important head, two things deſerve moſt ſeriouſly to be noted: Firſt,—That an exceſſive attachment to any ſpecies of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment is, in itſelf, by no means a deciſive evidence of a truly Chriſtian diſpoſition; for no ſuch teſt is to be found among the Scripture-rules for the trial of ſpirits. Secondly, That either an attachment or an averſion of this ſort, exceſſively indulged and gratified, to the excluſion of an habitual practice of ſelf denial and of watchfulneſs againſt temptations of every kind, may deplorably evince the dominion of a carnal ſpirit, which may have taken poſſeſſion of a man, may always be uppermoſt in the thoughts, may darken the underſtanding, and diſpoſe it to endleſs miſconceptions.

There is, no doubt, abundant reaſon to lament the errors and vices of profeſſors of Chriſtianity in every age; but, it is no very ſalutary practice to be frequently employed either in exaggerating the real failings of antient times, or in contemplating with complacency THE IMAGINARY excellencies of our own.—The hiſtorian in particular, is always called upon to diſpenſe juſtice with impartiality and to convey inſtruction with diſcernment.

The prudent reader will obſerve that theſe reflections are by no means miſcellaneous or irrelevant.—If the peruſal of Dr. H's. hiſtory be conceived

ceived to have ſuggeſted them, it is becauſe that performance appears uncommonly defective in the juſt appreciation of genuine piety and of ſpiritual graces: it is becauſe it has a great tendency to puff up modern Separatiſts and diſcontented perſons of all denominations with a vain conceit of their religious attainments,—to induce a proud belief of vaſt ſuperiority on compariſon with the early Chriſtians,—to withdraw the mind from the cultivation of internal practical humility,—and to diſpoſe it to eſtimate the fruits of godlineſs, rather by a contentious zeal for external ordinances and regulations than by a vigorous mortification of the fleſh with its affections and luſts.

§ 30. The facts and obſervations contained in theſe animadverſions will, probably, convince many Readers, that the Impartial hiſtory of Dr. H., ſo far from having ſuperſeded the neceſſity of the continuation of Mr. M.'s plan, renders that continuation ſtill more deſireable;—and the Writer aſſures the public, that nothing, which is contained in that publication, ſhall, as far as he is concerned, delay the progreſs of the fourth volume for a ſingle moment.

§ 31. As Editor of this ſecond edition of the firſt volume, his duty requires him moſt gratefully to acknowledge the liberal patronage of the Univerſity of Cambridge, in having, at their expence, already printed three volumes of Mr. M.'s Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory; and in having engaged to print the remaining manuſcript papers relative to the ſame ſubject. – Their kindneſs and conſideration in this matter certainly makes an indelible impreſſion on his mind:—And, if any thing could increaſe his affectionate attachment to that learned body after

ſo long and active a reſidence among them, it would be this honourable token of reſpect to the memory of his deceaſed brother; who, himſelf, many years ago, as a Student in the ſame Seminary*, received diſtinguiſhed marks of approbation.

§ 32. The liberties, which the Editor has taken with the MEANING or the MATTER of the Author in this new edition, are very few; for, the more he has examined and compared with each other the original authorities, which are frequently obſcure and contradictory, the more ſcrupulouſly faithful he has found him in his ſtatement of facts, and the more judicious and diſcreet in ſeparating truth from error, and in aſſigning the juſt degrees of probabilities.—If the alterations from the old edition ſhould, in ſome few inſtances, appear, on the compariſon, to be greater than might from this account be expected, the Reader is to underſtand, that theſe are to be juſtified either from actual remarks of the Author in manuſcript, or from the Editor's recollection of his converſations.—In regard to the obſervations and reflections contained in the work, the Editor conceives that the public will expect to have thoſe of the Author himſelf, —as indeed, by his talents, his taſte, and his experience in religious enquiries, he was eminently qualified to make them.

The ſmaller alterations, however,—in the uſe of particles, and of particular words, and in the conſtruction of ſentences, are very numerous:—and, if the Editor has helped the perſpicuity of the Author

* Mr. Milner took his degree of B. A. in the year 1766; and obtained, as a prize, one of the Chancellor's gold medals. The Candidates were uncommonly numerous and able.

Two handſome gold Medals are given annually by the Chancellor of the Univerſity of Cambridge to ſuch Bachelors of Arts as excel in claſſical learning.

Author, without diminiſhing his force, he has gained his aim.

At the time the firſt edition of this volume was printed, the Author had very few moments of time, which he could poſſibly beſtow on correcting either his copy or the preſs.

On the whole, the Reader will not fail to find this firſt volume much improved by this new Edition. The type, the printing, and the paper are all much better; and ſeveral helps to the memory are here ſupplied, which were omitted in the former Edition.

CENTURY I.

A SUMMARY VIEW OF THE CHURCH, SO FAR AS IT MAY BE COLLECTED FROM THE SCRIPTURE.

CHAP. I.

JERUSALEM.

THAT "repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, beginning at Jeruſalem *," is a paſſage of Scripture, which at once points out what the Chriſtian religion is, and where we may look for its beginning. We are to deſcribe the riſe of a diſpenſation the moſt glorious to God, and the moſt beneficent to man. Chriſtianity found mankind in an univerſal ſtate of ſin and miſery. In Judea alone ſomething of the worſhip of the true God exiſted. The forms of the Moſaic economy ſubſiſted, but were greatly obſcured and corrupted with Phariſaic traditions, and Sadducean profaneneſs. The ancient people of God had defiled themſelves with heathen profligacy: and, though there wanted not a multitude of teachers among them, yet, when He, who knew what was in man, ſaw the ſpiritual condition of this people, "he was moved with compaſſion toward them, becauſe they fainted, and were as ſheep without a ſhepherd." Certainly

* Luke xxiv. 47.

Certainly they were in poſſeſſion of a degree at leaſt of moral information, though that was extremely defective, and, in many points of view, fundamentally erroneous. But, of that inſtruction, which conſiſts in repentance and remiſſion of ſins, they were totally deſtitute. Notwithſtanding the light of the Old Teſtament, the proviſion of ſacrifices, the declaration of ſo many prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, and the examples of ſo many holy men, who, in that dark and preparatory diſpenſation, had learned to fear God, and to believe in his promiſes of grace, it does not appear, that the body of the Jewiſh nation were, in their religious ſtate, materially better than the reſt of the world. That men needed ſuch a change of diſpoſition as in Scripture is expreſſed by the term μετανοια, that they muſt become new creatures, and receive the forgiveneſs of ſins by faith in the ſacrifice of the Lamb of God, were ideas unknown in Judea:— if indeed we except the dim light which viſited the ſouls of Zacharias, of Simeon, of Anna, and of a few other devout perſons, who looked for redemption in Jeruſalem.

Such was the diſmal night, in which the Sun of Righteouſneſs made his appearance in the world. Scarce in any age had ignorance and wickedneſs a more general prevalence. The hiſtory by Joſephus evinces this. This author dwells chiefly indeed on public and political affairs; yet he throws a ſufficient light on the manners of the times, and ſhews, that the extreme impiety and profligacy of the Herodian princes were but too faithfully tranſcribed into the lives of their ſubjects. There had been periods of Jewiſh ſtory more favourable to godlineſs: for inſtance the age of Joſhua, of David, of Ezra and of Nehemiah. For ſome perſons there ever were who, at leaſt, implicitly reſted on the God

God of Iſrael, and truſted in the Redeemer that was to come. But the darkeſt ſeaſon was choſen for the exhibition of the Light of Life by him, "who hath put the times and ſeaſons in his own power."

To know our own depravity and helpleſſneſs, and, by faith in Chriſt, to know "experimentally" the ſuitable and the efficacious cure, is doubtleſs the genuine ſecret of true piety. But wherever wickedneſs and profaneneſs have ſpread very generally, the knowledge of theſe doctrines is uſually loſt. Amidſt a thouſand diſputes even on religious ſubjects, theſe are eraſed out of men's creed,—the very doctrines—which alone can be the means of freeing them from vice and folly. It was their ignorance of theſe things, which moved the Son of God to lament the uninformed condition of the Jews in this day. To dwell on the hiſtory of Chriſt himſelf is foreign to my deſign. Indeed a few ſouls were converted during HIS abode on earth: but the five hundred brethren, who ſaw him all at one time after his reſurrection, ſeem to have made the ſum total of his diſciples. And it may further be obſerved, that all theſe, and the eleven ſincere Apoſtles themſelves, were poſſeſſed with notions of a temporal kingdom, the rock on which their countrymen fatally ſplit in their expoſitions of the ſcriptures relating to the expected Meſſiah; and that they had not yet learned, with any clearneſs and ſteadineſs of apprehenſion, to ſet their affections on things above.

And now was the critical moment, when it pleaſed God to erect the firſt Chriſtian church at Jeruſalem. This was the firſt of thoſe EFFUSIONS of the Spirit of God, which from age to age have viſited the earth, ſince the coming of Chriſt, and prevented it from being quite over-

run with ignorance and ſin. It is an unſpeakable advantage, that we have the ſacred narrative to unfold this to our underſtandings. The want of ſuch an advantage will appear too fully in the hiſtory of the ſucceeding EFFUSIONS* of the Divine Spirit. Our duty however is not to complain, but to be thankful. If we carefully attend to this firſt inſtance, it will ſerve as a ſpecimen, by which to try other religious phenomena: and whether they lead to genuine piety or not, may generally be judged from their agreement or diſagreement with this.

Let us then obſerve the circumſtances in which this effuſion of the Holy Spirit was vouchſafed. As repentance and remiſſion of ſins were leading doctrines of Chriſt's religion, the moſt ample room had been made for them by the completion of his redemption. He had offered himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſins of men, "was riſen" from the dead "for our juſtification," and in the ſight of his diſciples was juſt aſcended up to heaven. That the Goſpel, the good news for penitent ſinners, the good news of reconciliation with God, ſhould begin at Jeruſalem, the ſcene of ſo much wickedneſs perpetrated, and of ſo much grace abuſed,

* In the term effuſion there is not here included the idea of the miraculous or extraordinary operations of the Spirit of God, but only of ſuch operations as he vouchſafes in every age to his church. The plan of this hiſtory has little connection with the former. It is, however, to be remembered, that a remarkable diſplay of the Divine Grace, at ſome particular ſeaſon, is always intended by the expreſſions EFFUSION of the Spirit of God, or EFFUSION of the Divine or Holy Spirit.—On this occaſion the term "out-pouring" of the Spirit of God, might be fully juſtified by the prophetical language of Scripture; it is alſo extremely ſignificant, and exactly coincides with the author's meaning;—but it is omitted becauſe it is grown ſo unfaſhionable that the ideas, which ought to be affixed to it, are almoſt entirely loſt.

abuſed, was itſelf no mean argument of the riches of Divine Goodneſs, and was an illuſtrious exemplification of the grand purpoſe of the Goſpel,—to juſtify the ungodly, and to quicken the dead. By the order of their Divine Maſter the Apoſtles remained at Jeruſalem, waiting for the promiſed Holy Spirit, "which they had heard of him *," and abode in mutual charity, and in the fervent exerciſe of prayer and ſupplication. What the Holy Spirit was to do for them, they ſeemed little to underſtand; if one may conjecture from their laſt queſtion to their Maſter, "Wilt thou at this time reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael?" It is natural to apprehend, that they were feaſting their imaginations with the delightful proſpect of a ſplendid kingdom, attended with all the circumſtances of external pomp and grandeur. Principalities and lordſhips were, in their fancy, ſoon to be aſſumed in the room of fiſhermen's nets and boats, and they pleaſed themſelves with the notion of their Maſter's external dominion in the world. Not that they were without a genuine taſte for ſomething infinitely better. At any rate, they afford us an uſeful leſſon;—"they continued in prayer and ſupplication." They, who do ſo in every age, ſhall doubtleſs underſtand, in God's due time, what the kingdom of heaven means, and find by happy experience that kingdom eſtabliſhed in their own ſouls, even "righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt."

During this intereſting criſis, we do not find them employed in any other buſineſs than this of prayer, except in filling up the apoſtolical college of twelve, by the ſubſtitution of Matthias in the room of the unhappy Judas, who, for the love of a little gain of this world, had unfitted himſelf for

* Acts i. 4.

for the riches of the next, and rendered himſelf unworthy to partake of the marvellous ſcene now about to be exhibited. Behold then the twelve Apoſtles, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the ſon of Alpheus, Simon Zelotes, Judas the brother of James, and Matthias, expecting and longing for the unſpeakable bleſſings of true chriſtianity!

The Pentecoſt, one of the Jewiſh feſtivals, was the æra of the Divine Viſitation. The Apoſtles were all in harmony aſſembled together; when lo! ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven as of a ruſhing mighty wind, and it filled all the houſe where they were ſitting. Their Maſter had, in his conference with Nicodemus*, compared the operations of the Holy Spirit to the wind, and the ſound from heaven on this occaſion was a juſt emblem of the power of the Divine Influence now commencing. And there appeared "unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it ſat upon each of them †:" Another emblem no leſs juſt, which the church of England uſes in her hymn to the Holy Ghoſt in the ordination-office,

> Thy bleſſed unction from above
> Is comfort, life, and fire of love.

In truth they now found they were "baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire ‡." And the effects in purifying their hearts, in enlightening their underſtandings, and in furniſhing them with gifts, and zeal, and boldneſs, hitherto unknown, were very ſoon exhibited. They were all filled with the "Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Of the many miraculous gifts now imparted, this of tongues, at once ſo uſeful for the propagation of

* John iii. † Acts ii. ‡ Matt. iii. 11.

of the Goſpel, and ſo ſtriking an atteſtation of its truth, firſt diſplayed itſelf to the amazement of a number of Jews, out of every nation under heaven, who heard theſe Galileans ſpeak each in his own language. There is reaſon to believe, that as many of them were devout men, they had been prepared by Divine Grace for the effectual reception of the Goſpel, and that a conſiderable part of the firſt converts were of their body.

While many were expreſſing their admiration at this ſtrange event, others, whom we may ſuppoſe to have been chiefly the native Jews, who underſtood not theſe ſeveral languages, derided the Apoſtles as intoxicated with wine: and now the zeal of Peter was ſtirred up to preach both to thoſe who admired, and to thoſe who ſcorned. He begged them to have ſo much candour, as not raſhly to ſuppoſe them to be men overcome with liquor, which the very time of the day rendered improbable, the third hour of the day, anſwering to our nine in the morning, when it ſeems no Jew was ever known to be in that ſituation. And as his audience profeſſed a regard for the ſacred oracles, he pointed out to them a remarkable prophecy in the ſecond chapter of Joel, then fulfilling, namely, the promiſe of an effuſion of the Spirit upon all fleſh, attended with dreadful puniſhments on thoſe who ſhould deſpiſe it:—yet that whoever, in the deep ſenſe of his ſinfulneſs and miſery, ſhould call on the name of the Lord, ſhould be ſaved. He then ſhews them how God had fulfilled his own purpoſes in the death of Jeſus, at the very time when they had been executing the dictates of their own malice. He proceeds to teſtify alſo of his reſurrection, according to the teſtimony of David, in Pſal. xvi. and cx. in both which Pſalms it was evident, that

not David himſelf, but Chriſt was the ſubject of the prophecy. He openly declares, that he himſelf and his brethren were witneſſes of the reſurrection of their Maſter, that He was exalted to heaven, and had received of the Father the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, which He had now ſhed forth on the Apoſtles, and concerning which they now had the plain demonſtration of their ſenſes. The concluſion which he draws from this chain of argument, ſupported by the mutual ſtrength of facts and prophecies, was this,—that the deſpiſed perſon, whom they had thought unworthy to live, and had expoſed to the moſt painful and ignominious death, was owned by the God of their fathers to be the Lord and Meſſiah, who was the expectation of the Jews, and through whom alone ſalvation was exhibited to ſinful men.

The deſign of the whole ſermon was evidently to produce conviction of ſin in the hearers; and it pleaſed God to crown it with ſucceſs. Multitudes were pricked in their hearts: they found themſelves guilty of murdering the Chriſt of God: and ſo powerfully were they ſtruck with a ſenſe of their extreme unworthineſs, that they found themſelves alſo deſtitute of all reſources in themſelves. They cry to Peter and to the reſt, "Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?" Similar indeed is the beginning of all true repentance, when men find themſelves really loſt, helpleſs, and willing to be led in any way which God ſhall pleaſe, becauſe they have no ability in themſelves, and "there is no health in them*." Peter ſaid unto them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. For the promiſe is unto you, and to your children, and

* The Church of England Confeſſion.

and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call."

Thus the doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins, in the name of Jeſus, began at Jeruſalem. The people were called upon to "loath themſelves for their paſt iniquities," and to give themſelves up to God for an intire renovation of ſoul; and the Grace of God in Chriſt was offered to every one of them. The Apoſtle exhorted them all to receive this grace, by believing on Jeſus for the remiſſion of ſins, with a ſubmiſſion to his ordinance of baptiſm as an emblem of waſhing away their ſins; and he aſſured them, that God would receive them into his favour in this way: that however guilty they were, all their ſins ſhould be pardoned, as if they had never been committed; and the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be poured on them alſo: for the promiſe of it was very general;—to them, to their children, to the moſt diſtant lands, wherever God ſhould call men to reconciliation by Jeſus Chriſt. Thus did St. Peter convince his hearers of ſin, and inſtruct them in the way of ſalvation.

They, whoſe hearts God had ſmitten with a ſenſe of guilt, were conſoled by the grace of forgiveneſs; and "with many other words did he teſtify and exhort, ſaying, Save yourſelves from this untoward generation.—Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized; and the ſame day there were added to them about three thouſand ſouls."

In this manner did the convictions and conſolations of the Holy Ghoſt attend the firſt preaching of St. Peter. And this great multitude appear to have been fully converted to Chriſtianity: For they continued "ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles' doctrine and

and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Here we ſee the regular appearance of the firſt Chriſtian church. Theſe men were not Chriſtians in name only; they underſtood and believed the apoſtolical doctrine concerning repentance and remiſſion of ſins in the name of Jeſus Chriſt: they continued united to the paſtors whom God had made inſtruments of their converſion: they received conſtantly the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which they enjoyed real communion with their Saviour; and prayer was their daily employment and delight. Their holy boldneſs towards God, and their joyful ſenſation of forgiveneſs, were tempered with a godly fear. Every ſoul was poſſeſſed with this conſiſtent mixture of holy joy and fear. They had felt the pangs of guilt: they had ſeen what a price was paid for their redemption: they "rejoiced with trembling," as men juſt emerged from the pit of deſtruction; and the ſame Spirit which cried, Abba, Father *, in their hearts, taught them to reverence His juſtice and His holineſs, to fear Him, and to dread ſin above all other evils. And though it does not appear to have been any injunction of the Apoſtles, that they ſhould live together in a community of goods, and though experience ſoon taught the firſt Chriſtians, that the general eſtabliſhment and continuance of ſuch an uſage was impracticable, yet, doubtleſs, this practice for the preſent was a rare and convincing inſtance of mutual charity, and proved how ſoon the operations of Divine Grace had looſened their minds from the love of this world. They "ſold their goods and poſſeſſions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." In this happy frame of mind they

* Galatians iv. 6.

they ſpent much of their time in the temple, and in diſcharging the mutual offices of ſocial kindneſs: even their bodily food was received with a gladneſs before unknown. The Grace of God gave a pleaſant tincture to every object with which they converſed; and while they extolled it with their hearts and lips, they, as yet, found favour with all the people. The natural enmity of the heart againſt the Goſpel of Chriſt did not at firſt ſhew itſelf, and the purity of their lives could not but recommend them to the eſteem of others. "The Lord added to the church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved." Thus plainly St. Luke intimates WHOSE grace it was that effected all this, and that his hand, in the Divine Effuſion here deſcribed, ought ever to be acknowledged.

A miracle wrought ſoon after by Peter and John on a lame man, a well-known beggar above forty years old, gave a farther atteſtation to their divine authority. Peter was hence led to preach * to the admiring multitude the ſame doctrine of repentance and remiſſion, and exalted the Lord Jeſus, as the Holy One, and the Juſt, and the Prince of Life, to whom they had wickedly preferred even a murderer, Barabbas. He diſclaims all merit in himſelf or in his colleagues in the miracle: He ſhews that God had glorified his Son Jeſus; and that it was through faith in his name, that the act had been performed. He charitably alleges their ignorance, as the only poſſible alleviation of their guilt; and which indeed alone prevented it from being unpardonable. He exhorts them to repentance and converſion, and lays open to their view the proſpect not of a temporal, but of a ſpiritual kingdom; in the hope of which they were to rejoice, and patiently bear the afflictions of

* Acts iii.

of this preſent life: he warns them at the ſame time of the threats denounced by Moſes againſt the deſpiſers of the Meſſiah, through whom alone ſalvation was offered to all nations, though the firſt invitation was addreſſed to the Jews.

The Church was now increaſed to five thouſand; and the ſignal for perſecution was raiſed by the magiſtrates of Jeruſalem, many of whom were Sadducees, enemies to the doctrine of a reſurrection, and, in truth, to every thing that had any tendency to raiſe men's minds above the world. The two Apoſtles were impriſoned that evening, but their examinatton was deferred till the next day. The high prieſt, and the perſons of greateſt authority, looked on this matter as an occaſion of ſufficient conſequence to require the calling of a ſolemn court. Peter to their interrogatories frankly anſwers, that the miracle had been "wrought in the name of Jeſus, whom YE crucified, whom God raiſed from the dead." He boldly rebukes them for their contempt of Him, who is the only Saviour: For "there is none other name under heaven given to men, whereby we muſt be ſaved."

The wiſdom and boldneſs of two unlettered fiſhermen, who had been companions of Jeſus, ſtruck the court with aſtoniſhment. But finding no preſent opportunity of gratifying their malice, on account of the ſplendor of the miracle, they diſmiſſed them with a ſtrict charge to be ſilent in future concerning the name of Jeſus, though the Apoſtles ingenuouſly confeſſed their inability to comply with ſuch an order, becauſe, "they muſt obey God rather than man."

* The Apoſtles returned to their company, and reporting the threats of the magiſtrates, they all, with united ſupplication, intreated the Lord to grant

* Acts iv.

grant them boldneſs to perſevere, notwithſtanding the menaces of His and their enemies. They were filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and enabled to proceed with calm intrepidity.

The moſt perfect unanimity as yet prevailed among the Chriſtians; and they not only profeſſed to have all things common, but alſo practiſed the rule accordingly with the greateſt cheerfulneſs. Divine Grace was largely diffuſed among them. The poor lacked nothing: the richer brethren converted their poſſeſſions into money, and left the diſtribution of the whole to the diſcretion of the Apoſtles. And, in this liberality, Barnabas of Cyprus, a Levite who had lands of his own, moſt probably in his native country, was eminently diſtinguiſhed.

It appeared very manifeſt, that the Apoſtles enjoyed much more of the power of Chriſt's religion than they had ever done while their Maſter was with them on earth. Such was the effect of the EFFUSION of the Spirit. We hear no more of their dreams concerning a temporal kingdom. The courage of Peter in confronting the magiſtrates, forms a perfect contraſt to his timidity in denying his Maſter. Wherever the ſame repentance, faith, hope, charity, heavenly-mindedneſs appear, THERE is true Chriſtianity; and there alſo the enmity of the world will be excited. Of this ſomething has already diſcovered itſelf, and more is now calling for our attention, as well as ſomething much more grievous,—the detection of hypocriſy in certain profeſſors.

The caſe of Judas had already prepared the Church to expect the appearance of tares among the wheat; and our Lord's parable alluded to, had aſſured them of it. Yet when ſuch things occur, good men are often too much ſurpriſed, and the wicked

wicked unreaſonably triumph. There was one Ananias among the diſciples, whoſe conſcience had ſo far been impreſſed, as to reſpect that doctrine and fellowſhip, to which he had joined himſelf, but whoſe heart was never divorced from the love of the world. A regard for his reputation induced him to ſell his poſſeſſions with the reſt: but the fear of poverty, and the want of faith in God, diſpoſed him to reſerve part of the price, while he brought the other to the Apoſtles. Peter upbraided him with his being under the influence of Satan, "in lying to the Holy Ghoſt:" ſhewed him that the guilt of his hypocriſy was aggravated by this conſideration, that the action was committed not againſt man, but againſt God; and that nothing could be ſaid to extenuate his baſeneſs, becauſe he was under no neceſſity of ſelling his property at all, or of laying it at the Apoſtles' feet, after he had ſold it. Immediately the unhappy man fell down dead: and, about three hours after, his wife Sapphira was made a ſimilar monument of Divine Juſtice, as ſhe had been partaker of her huſband's guilt.

Such a proof of the diſcernment of ſpirits, and of the power of puniſhing hypocriſy, reſting in the governors of the Church, filled all, who heard theſe things with awe. The Lord had now ſhewn his holineſs, as well as his grace: and the love of the world, the ſtanding hereſy, which infects his Church in all ages, was a ſecond time puniſhed by a ſignal interpoſition of heaven. Multitudes of both ſexes were added to the Church, chiefly of the common people. Of the reſt indeed, though ſome could not but entertain favourable ſentiments of Chriſtianity, yet, among the rich and great, none durſt hazard his character ſo far as to eſpouſe it*.

The

* Acts v.

The Sadducees appear at this time to have had the chief ſway in the Jewiſh ſtate. Theſe formed a licentious, worldly-minded ſect, and in their opinions, they were the moſt corrupt of all thoſe which at that time were maintained in Judea. The high prieſt and his party were of this ſect, and were filled with indignation, to ſee the progreſs of the Goſpel. Their firſt ſtep was to impriſon the Apoſtles, who, by night, through the miniſtry of an angel, were ſet free, and ordered to preach in the temple. The next morning a full Sanhedrim was convened, and the Apoſtles were ordered to be brought into court. An angel had opened the priſon-doors; and the court was aſtoniſhed to find the priſoners eſcaped out of priſon: they were, however informed, that they were preaching in the temple. The favourable regard of the common people obliged the Sanhedrim to uſe ſome addreſs in conducting their priſoners in a gentle manner before the court. The high prieſt upbraids them with their diſobedience to the former injunction of ſilence, to whom they returned their former anſwer, that "they ought to obey God rather than men." They bore witneſs to the reſurrection of Chriſt, and declared, that "God had exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins," and that the "Holy Ghoſt, whom God beſtows on thoſe who obey him, witneſſed" the ſame thing. With ſuch plainneſs did theſe firſt Chriſtians lay open the real nature of the Goſpel, and exhibit it as ſomething extremely different from a mere ſyſtem of morals, though it included all good morality in its nature. The teſtimony of Jeſus, the forgiveneſs of ſins through his blood, and the operations of the Holy Ghoſt, as they were doubtleſs the peculiar characteriſtics

of

of Chriſtianity, ſo they were thoſe things which moſt offended the Jewiſh rulers, and have been indeed the chief object of the enmity of unconverted men in all ages.

The ſpirit of perſecution was proceeding to exerciſe itſelf in violent counſels. There was however one Gamaliel among them, a Phariſee, of a ſect, not indeed inimical to the doctrine of a reſurrection, and by no means ſo heterodox in general as the Sadducees, though on the whole agreeing with them in the hatred of Chriſtianity. This man was judicious, learned, and reſpectable, and poſſeſſed much worldly prudence. Beyond this no evidence appears. Providence made an important uſe of him, at this time, to prolong twelve moſt valuable lives, who were deſigned to ſpread the Goſpel through the world; and by their inſpired writings, (not one of which was yet publiſhed) to ſpeak to us at this day. Gamaliel, by ſome authentic hiſtorical precedents, inſtructed the members of the court, that perſons, who roſe up to propagate new ſects, if not ſent of God, were ſoon annihilated. He wiſhed them to exerciſe forbearance and moderation toward the Apoſtles, whoſe influence would ſoon come to nothing, if it were merely human; if divine, to attempt its deſtruction would be equally fooliſh and impious. This ſage advice was followed, and the Apoſtles were diſmiſſed, but not without ſtripes, and a ſevere charge given them, no more to preach in the name of Jeſus. They ceaſed not however to "teach and preach Jeſus Chriſt, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name."

The Church was now much enlarged, conſiſting partly of native, partly of foreign Jews, who uſed the Greek language, called on that account

Helleniſts

Hellenists or Grecians. These supposed, that in the daily supply of the poor, the Apostles had not ministered equal relief to their widows, as to those of the Hebrews. Men who know any thing of the work of God, in the visitation of his Holy Spirit, and have any acquaintance with the fulness of employ, which Christian ministers have in great and populous cities, in instructing, warning, consoling, and directing awakened and serious minds, will not wonder, if, through inadvertence, some temporary neglects might have taken place. The Apostles however, with great mildness and wisdom, soon regulated this affair. They informed the disciples, that the ministry of the word of God must be attended to in the first place, and must not be neglected for the sake of providing for the poor. They therefore advised the disciples to look out for seven holy and wise men, to whom this business should be committed. "But we," say they, "will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*." O that those who call themselves their successors, were always disposed in like manner!—The whole multitude consented with pleasure. Seven deacons were amicably elected, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, every one of whom has a Grecian name, and therefore may have been an Hellenist; and in this easy way the first appearances of contention were blasted in the Church, and seven coadjutors were appointed to the Apostles, some of whom, at least, were of signal service, not only in temporal, but also in spiritual things So happy is it to be under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, and so amiably did the Love of Christ then rule in the hearts of his people. Even many of the priests now obeyed

* Acts vi.

obeyed the Goſpel, and Jeruſalem ſaw continually large acceſſions made to the Church.

Of theſe deacons Stephen was at firſt the moſt diſtinguiſhed. A ſynagogue of Helleniſt Jews held a conteſt with him, the reſult of which filled them with ſuch vexation, that they ſuborned men to accuſe him of blaſphemy againſt Moſes, and againſt God. By this artifice Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrim, where God threw a luſtre over his countenance, which even his enemies could not but obſerve. In his defence he boldly rebuked the Jews, and ſhewed that their conduct was but too faithful a copy of that of their fathers, who had treated Moſes and the prophets with contempt, and had murdered a number of thoſe, who had propheſied of the coming of the Juſt One,—of whom they had now been the betrayers and murderers, while they vainly gloried in the magnificence of their temple, and put external ſervices in the room of genuine piety.

Thus did Stephen aim at the ſame point with Peter, to convince his audience of ſin in the firſt place, and to leave them no hope in their own righteouſneſs. Seldom has the contraſt between the ſpirit of the world and the Spirit of God appeared more ſtriking. "They were cut to the heart, and gnaſhed upon him with their teeth." But he, "full of the Holy Ghoſt, looked up ſtedfaſtly to heaven, and ſaw the glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God," and what he ſaw, he openly confeſſed. Their patience was exhauſted, and they ſtoned him to death, while he was calling upon his Divine Maſter, and ſaying "Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit." Thus firm and conſtant was his faith: and his charity was no leſs conſpicuous. For, he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this ſin to their charge;"

charge;" thus ſhewing how entirely void of all malice were thoſe vehement rebukes, which he had uttered againſt their wickedneſs, and which men of puſillanimous prudence are in all ages diſpoſed to condemn. And when he had ſaid this, he fell aſleep *;—the uſual beautiful phraſe of the New Teſtament, to expreſs the death of ſaints, and at the ſame time to intimate their expectation of the reſurrection.

The eloquence of a Cicero would be mere feebleneſs on this occaſion. All praiſe is below the excellency of that ſpirit, which ſhone in this firſt of martyrs. Let it ſtand as an example of the genuine temper of martyrdom, of real faith in Chriſt, and of real charity to men;—and let heroes of the world hide their heads in confuſion.

Judea ſeems to have been at this time without a Procurator, Pontius Pilate having been diſgraced, and Vitellius, the governor of Syria, was a man of great moderation toward the Jews. In theſe circumſtances the mildneſs of the Roman government was eventually the occaſion of a ſevere perſecution to the Church. The Jewiſh magiſtrates, who a little before had not the power of life and death, and could not murder the Lord of Life without the intervention of their Roman maſters, were now left to themſelves, at leaſt in religious concerns, and Stephen was their firſt Chriſtian victim. He was buried with great lamentation by the Church, and a conſiderable number ſuffered ſoon after.

A young man called Saul, an Helleniſt† of Tarſus, a perſon of an active ambitious ſpirit, who had been educated at Jeruſalem under Gamaliel,

* Acts vii.

† That is one born and bred a Jew in ſome country where the Greek language was ſpoken.

liel, and outſtripped all his equals in Judaical learning, diſtinguiſhed himſelf in this perſecution. He took care of the clothes of the witneſſes who were employed in ſtoning Stephen *, and made havock of the church, entering into "every houſe, and haling men and women, he committed them to priſon; and when they were put to death, he gave his voice againſt them." In truth, the diſciples ſeemed now to be left to the rage of men diſpoſed to ſhew them no mercy; and a ſuperficial obſerver might have ſuppoſed, that the fate of Theudas and Judas, mentioned by Gamaliel, was about to attend the Chriſtians. Men had not yet learned, that the "blood of the martyrs was the ſeed of the Church." The religious worſhip of the diſciples muſt, doubtleſs, have ſuffered a grievous interruption. Indeed none of them found it ſafe to remain at Jeruſalem. The Apoſtles alone thought good to ſtand their ground, and, by the watchful care of their God, they were preſerved. The Chriſtians, diſperſed throughout Judea and Samaria, preached the word wherever they went. And thus this perſecution was the firſt occaſion of the diffuſion of the Goſpel through various regions, and what was meant to annihilate it, was overruled to extend it exceedingly. But we ſhall confine ourſelves in this ſection to the Church of Jeruſalem.

Saul, who was all attention to the work of perſecution, was vexed to hear, that a number of the Chriſtians had eſcaped to Damaſcus, an antient city of Syria; and he procured a commiſſion from the high prieſt to bring them bound to Jeruſalem. It was a conſiderable journey, but religious glory was his idol. When he was near to Damaſcus, a ſudden light from heaven, exceeding even

* Acts viii.

even that of the ſun*, arreſted the daring zealot, and ſtruck him to the ground. At the ſame time a voice called to him, ſaying, Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me? And he ſaid, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord ſaid, "I am Jeſus, whom thou perſecuteſt: It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks." In this marvellous manner did the Son of God make known his truth, his majeſty, and his power to this enterprizing perſecutor, and evince, to all ages, what he can do to the "praiſe of the glory of his grace." The will of Saul was broken, and made ſubmiſſive to God for the firſt time, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," was his cry; and whenever this is uttered from the heart, it will not fail to bring down the divine bleſſing. He was directed to go into Damaſcus, where he remained three days without ſight and without food, yet conſtantly employed in prayer for divine grace and mercy. Thus the neceſſity of the conviction of ſin was preached to him with circumſtances more extraordinary than thoſe, which took place upon the preaching to the three thouſand firſt converts; but the ſpiritual inſtruction conveyed was preciſely the ſame. The work of converting grace may vary very much in non eſſential circumſtances,—its nature never varies. The grace of forgiveneſs by Jeſus Chriſt would have been no welcome news to this Phariſee, had he ſtill remained in the confidence of his own righteouſneſs; but now it was as life from the dead. After three days, by the particular direction of a viſion from the Lord Jeſus, Ananias, a diſciple of Damaſcus, was ſent to him with the tidings of peace. He had heard of the active malice of Saul, but was encouraged to go by a poſitive declaration that Saul was a choſen veſſel.

Ananias

* Acts ix.

Ananias opened his commiſſion by informing Saul, that the Lord Jeſus had ſent him, to the end that he might receive his ſight, and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt. Both theſe effects immediately took place. Ananias exhorted him to delay no longer, but to "waſh away his ſins, calling on the name of the Lord*." He was baptized, and ſoon refreſhed both in mind and body: and from that time the whole vehemence of his natural character, and the whole power of his intellectual faculties, which were doubtleſs of the firſt magnitude among men, were ſanctified to the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt; and to his death, he was engaged in a courſe of labours in the Church with unparalleled ſucceſs. For this is he, who is commonly known by the name of St. Paul, and "his memorial is bleſſed for ever." He was particularly commiſſioned to preach to the Gentiles, and of all the Apoſtles he ſeems to have entered with the greateſt penetration into the nature of Chriſtianity. Salvation by grace through faith was his darling theme, a doctrine diametrically oppoſite to the ſelf-righteous ſcheme in which he had been wont to glory. His countrymen, the Jews, were particularly fierce in oppoſing this grand article of the Goſpel, and were ſtung to the quick when attacked by their once favourite champion. No doubt he had been ſincere in his religion formerly; yet, is he far from exculpating himſelf on this account. On the contrary he magnifies the grace of the Lord Jeſus, as extended to him, a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, injurious, and the chief of ſinners†, in whom the long-ſuffering of the Lord had been exhibited, "for a pattern to them, who ſhall hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting:"—that mankind may know, that God accepts ſinners on Chriſt's account

* Acts xxii. 16. † 1 Tim. i.

account alone, and through faith in his blood; and that nothing can be more contrary to the whole deſign of the Goſpel, than to ſeek ſalvation by our own works of any kind. He ſeems ever after to have lamented deeply the miſerable ſtate of his countrymen, who "had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*." He pitied their ſelf-righteous notions: he knew how deceitful thoſe notions were to thoſe, who were under the power of them, by his own experience: and, while he rejoiced on account of that grace, which had redeemed himſelf from hell, he commiſerated thoſe, who were faſt advancing thither in fearleſs preſumption. In the third chapter of the Philippians he gives us a very particular view of himſelf. To truſt in any thing for ſalvation, except Chriſt alone, is with him to "have confidence in the fleſh." No man appeared once to have had more juſt pretenſions to ſuch confidence than himſelf. His regular circumciſion on the eighth day, Hebrew deſcent, Phariſaic ſtrictneſs, zealous Judaiſm, and blameleſs morals, ſeemed to exalt him above the common level of his countrymen: but he declares that he "reckoned all theſe things as dung, that he might win Chriſt;" and in him alone he deſires to be found without his own righteouſneſs to truſt in; and he maintains the ſettled determination of his ſoul in this article of juſtification. Were it not for the perverſe blindneſs of fallen nature, one might be aſtoniſhed to find many perſons of learning and good ſenſe, after reading this account of the Apoſtle by himſelf, ſtill endeavouring to repreſent him as mixing grace and works in the ſubject of juſtification, and deſcribing him as only excluding ceremonial works from the office of juſtifying a ſinner. But to proceed:

Having

* Rom. x.

Having preached Chriſt for three years abroad, he went up to Jeruſalem. Here he attempted to join himſelf to the Church, but the remembrance of what he had been, and the very imperfect account which they had of what he then was, prevented the Chriſtians from receiving him, till Barnabas brought him to the Apoſtles, (two of them only, Peter, and James* the Lord's brother,) and informed them of his genuine converſion. This cleared up all doubts; and he was now engaged in the work of the miniſtry at Jeruſalem, and would gladly have remained there, but the Lord, by a viſion, aſſured him, that the Jews would not receive his teſtimony; and that the great ſcene of his labours was to be among the Gentiles.

In fact, ſome addreſs was needful in his brethren to ſave his life from the rage of the Jews, and he was conducted to his native city of Tarſus. By this time, however, the fury of perſecution ſubſided: the Lord gave reſt to his Church: and the diſciples both at Jeruſalem and elſewhere, walked in the very beſt manner, in which they can walk on this ſide heaven, "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt." Where theſe go together, exceſſes of all ſorts are prevented: and inward joy and outward obedience conſpire to demonſtrate, that there Chriſt reigns indeed.

Yet ſo ſlow are men to receive new divine truths, eſpecially thoſe which militate againſt old prejudices, that the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem contended with Peter on account of his intercourſe with the Gentiles of Cæſarea. The fierceneſs of Peter's natural character was now abated: with great meekneſs he reaſoned on the caſe with his bigoted brethren,

* Gal. i. 18, 19.

brethren, and convinced them by the evident proofs of the grace of God being vouchſafed to Gentiles, that it was lawful to have communion with them *. They glorified God, ſaying, "Then hath God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance to life." Unutterable grace indeed to us, confeſſed at length and owned by our elder brethren the Jews! David had juſt reaſon to ſay, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hands of man †." Even a converted Jew admits with difficulty, that the grace of God may viſit a Gentile.

The viſits of Paul to Jeruſalem ſeem to have been but ſhort. The body of the Jewiſh nation ſought his deſtruction; and his Gentile connections and very reſerved practice of Moſaical ceremonies, rendered him no peculiar favourite in the mother-church, though they "could not but glorify the grace of God which was in him ‡." But the Church is not perfect on earth. His next return to Jeruſalem was, however, of a popular kind, namely, to convey the alms of Gentile converts to the Jewiſh Chriſtians oppreſſed by a "famine, which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Cæſar §." His companion to Jeruſalem was Barnabas, whoſe liberality in the beginning had been ſo eminent. This ſervice being diſcharged, they both returned to miniſter to the Gentiles.

The civil power of Judea was now in the hands of Herod Agrippa, a great favourite of the Roman Emperor, a perſon of conſiderable talents, and full of that ſpecious virtue, which, in ſecular annals, would entitle him to great renown. In the

* Acts xi. † 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. ‡ Gal. i. ult.
§ Acts xi. toward the end.

the Church of Chriſt he ſtands a perſecutor, and his virtues are, in the ſtrong but juſt language of Auguſtine, *ſplendid ſins. Yet his perſecution was not the effect of a cruel temper. Had the Jews regarded Chriſtianity with a favourable eye, he, at leaſt, would have protected it. But long before this time the general favour of the common people toward the Chriſtians had been diſſipated by the active malice of the rulers, and Chriſt was found to have no laſting friends, but thoſe whom he made ſo by effectual grace. The firſt victim of this political perſecution was James the ſon of Zebedee: he was ſlain with the ſword, the firſt of the Apoſtles, who departed from the Church below, to join that which is above.

Finding that the act was popular, Herod attempted to diſpatch† Peter alſo. But God had reſerved him for more ſervices; and yet, in all appearance, there was no hope of his preſervation. He was impriſoned, and ſtrictly guarded, with a view, after the paſſover, when the concourſe of Jews at Jeruſalem was very large, to have him publicly executed. The king pleaſed himſelf with the idea of ingratiating himſelf with his ſubjects; but the Church has arms, which men of the world underſtand not, and they were vigorouſly uſed on this occaſion.

A ſpirit of earneſt perſevering prayer was poured on the Church of Jeruſalem. The Lord delayed to anſwer, till the critical moment;—a method not uncommon of exerciſing the faith, and zeal, and patience of his people. By the miraculous interpoſition of an angel, Peter, the night before his intended execution, was delivered from priſon. At firſt he imagined that to be done in viſion, which was a reality. At length being fully come to

* Splendida peccata. † Acts xii.

to himſelf, and reflecting on what the Lord had done, he came to the houſe of Mary the mother of John Mark, a woman of eminent piety and of ſome opulence, where many Chriſtians were gathered together in the religious employment of prayer. Thoſe only, who know what the ſpirit of prayer is, can conceive the vehemence of wreſtling, which then engaged Chriſtian hearts. The ſcene which followed was at once moſt aſtoniſhing, and moſt pleaſing. They hear a perſon knocking at the door; a young woman named Rhoda comes to hearken; ſhe knows Peter's voice; joy prevents her from opening the gate; ſhe returns to inform the ſupplicants, that Peter ſtood before it; they are induced to ſuſpect her of inſanity, rather than to believe that their prayers were heard; ſo ſlow are even the beſt to believe the goodneſs of God. She perſeveres in her firſt aſſertion; it muſt then, ſay they, be his angel*. Peter continues knocking; they open at length; they behold him, and are aſtoniſhed. Having waved his hand, and brought them to ſilence, he informs them of the Lord's wonderful interpoſition in his favour. Go, ſays he, and ſhew theſe things to James, and the brethren. James, who was the Lord's brother, with himſelf and John had the greateſt concern in the government of the mother-church† at that time. Peter retires then to a place of concealment.

Little did Herod apprehend that his own death ſhould precede that of his priſoner. On a public occaſion, in which he appeared in great ſplendor, he delivered an oration, ſo pleaſing to his audience, "that they ſhouted, it is the voice of a God,

* The idea of the miniſtry of angels among men was popular with the Jews; poſſibly theſe good men might carry it too far.

† Gal. ii. 9.

God, and not of a man." That moment he was ſmitten with an incurable diſeaſe by an angel, becauſe he "gave not God the glory." That pride and ambition, which had gained him the character of a patriot, orator, and ſtateſman, were puniſhed with death by Him, who "ſeeth not as man ſeeth;" and he fell a warning to princes not to ſeek glory in oppoſition to God.

The next memorable circumſtance in the hiſtory of the mother-church will deſerve our particular attention. This was the firſt Chriſtian council. The controverſy which occaſioned it, involved a ſubject of vaſt conſequence in real religion.

* About twenty years had elapſed ſince the effuſion of the Spirit had commenced; a period of time in which, even in the midſt of one of the moſt wicked nations in the world, in Jeruſalem and in its neighbourhood, God had erected his kingdom in the hearts of thouſands who had lived in great unanimity and charity, "keeping the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace," conſcious of their Divine Maſter's ſpiritual preſence, and rejoicing in hope of his ſecond coming to complete their felicity. They had ſuſtained, in his ſtrength, with much patience, two very ſevere perſecutions, in the former of which a Deacon, in the ſecond an Apoſtle had ſealed the truth with his blood. In an earlier part of this period their holy harmony had been a little interrupted by a ſecular contention; but this was ſoon compoſed. The time was not yet arrived, when thoſe, who called

* I once for all obſerve here, that the niceties of chronology make no part of my ſtudy in this work. Yet I ſhall endeavour to attend ſo much to hiſtorical connection, as to be generally right within a few years. This ſeems ſufficient for my purpoſe, and whoever attends to the ſecond and third chapters to the Galatians, will ſee, that I cannot err much in this inſtance.

called themſelves Chriſtians, could ſo much forget the dignity of their profeſſion, as to contend paſſionately for worldly things. The preſent controverſy had a more intimate connection with the Chriſtian religion itſelf, and therefore ſeemed more likely to diſturb the union of men, with whom ſpiritual objects were the chief ground of concern. The Jews were ſtrongly attached to their own religious national peculiarities. Under the influence of pride, envy, and other evil paſſions, this diſpoſition ſupported the ſpirit of ſelf-righteouſneſs. Nothing could be more contrary to the genius of the Goſpel than the attempt of ſome Chriſtian Jews, who endeavoured to infuſe into the Gentile converts an idea of the neceſſity of circumciſion, and of obedience to the whole of the Moſaic ceremonial, in order to ſalvation. Some of the Phariſees themſelves were now real Chriſtians, but they were diſpleaſed to ſee and hear of ſo many Gentiles admitted into the Chriſtian Church, and regarded by the Apoſtles as on an equal footing with themſelves in the favour of God. Thus were their minds darkened with reſpect to the article of juſtification: and, before they were aware, by thus inſiſting on the neceſſity of circumciſion, they practically averred, that the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was not ſufficient for man's ſalvation; that the favour of God was to be purchaſed by human works, in part at leaſt; and that their ritual obſervances, contributed to their acceptance with God.

This was the firſt time that the natural pride and ignorance of the human heart, diſguiſed under the pretence of religious zeal, attempted to undermine the ſimplicity of the faith, by which hitherto Chriſtians had reſted with complacency on Jeſus alone, had enjoyed peace of conſcience, and

had

had been conſtrained to obedience by love. The Apoſtles Paul and Barnabas looked on the growing evil with a jealous eye, and after no ſmall fruitleſs altercation with the zealots, thought it better to refer the full conſideration of the queſtion to a council of Apoſtles and Elders at Jeruſalem. And now Paul returned to Jeruſalem the third time ſince his converſion, and about ſeventeen years after it; and, in his progreſs with Barnabas, reported the converſion of the Gentiles, which gave great joy to the Chriſtian Jews in general.

At the Council, Peter, who was returned to Jeruſalem, and ſince Agrippa's death was no longer moleſted, opened the debate by obſerving, that a conſiderable time ago, God had ſelected him to preach to the Gentiles, and had bleſſed his labours with unequivocal ſucceſs, in purifying their hearts by faith, and in diſpenſing the Holy Ghoſt among them, no leſs than on the Jews. After God himſelf had thus decided, he ſaid it appeared preſumptuous in any perſon to impoſe a yoke on the Gentiles, from which the Divine Indulgence had exempted them. He inſiſted that the yoke itſelf, eſpecially when laid on the conſcience as neceſſary to ſalvation, was intolerable: and he concluded, that even they, who ſtill, for charitable and prudential reaſons, perſiſted in the ritual obſervances, were yet obliged to repoſe for ſalvation only on the "grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt," as well as theſe Gentiles, who never had obſerved them at all. This full teſtimony of Peter was ſupported by Paul and Barnabas, who gave large proof of the Divine Grace vouchſafed to the Gentiles. James, who ſeems to have been the ſtanding paſtor of Jeruſalem, confirmed the ſame argument, by the prophets of the Old Teſtament, agreeably to Peter's

Peter's declaration of the mercy of God in viſiting the Gentiles. He gave his opinion, that the Gentiles ſhould no longer be moleſted with notions ſubverſive of the grace of God, and tending to teach them dependance on human works inſtead of the atonement of Chriſt for ſalvation. Only he recommended, that the Council ſhould direct them to abſtain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things ſtrangled, and from blood*. For the number of Jews diſperſed through Gentile cities, who heard Moſes read every Sabbath-day, required theſe precautions.

A letter was ſent according to theſe views; nor does it appear that there was one diſſenting voice in the Council. It is remarkable, that the ſynod uſed this ſtriking expreſſion of cenſure againſt the zealots, they "troubled you with words, ſubverting your ſouls." Certainly the charitable Apoſtles would not ſo ſtrongly have rebuked a trifling error. Nor is there, I think, any other method of underſtanding this aright, but on the principle already ſtated, that the harm did not conſiſt in practiſing theſe ceremonies, though virtually abrogated by the death of Chriſt. For theſe were practiſed by the Apoſtles themſelves, conſtantly by ſuch as lived in Judea, and occaſionally by the reſt. The real fault was the depending upon them for ſalvation, in oppoſition to the grace of Chriſt. Here the Apoſtles knew it behoved them to be jealous, that God might be glorified, and ſouls comforted:

* Though an idol was nothing, and what was offered to it was nothing, yet St. Paul has given ſolid reaſons why Chriſtians ſhould abſtain from ſuch meats. Fornication was a ſin, concerning the evil of which the heathen converts might be, he apprehended, as yet uninformed; and to abſtain from things ſtrangled and from blood, was neceſſary, in order to have any intercourſe with Jews at all.

comforted: and the joy, and conſolation, and eſtabliſhment in the faith*, which enſued amongſt the Gentiles, confirms this interpretation.

It is to be feared, that the Church of Jeruſalem received not all the benefit, which was to be wiſhed, from the wiſdom and charity of the Council, though it doubtleſs would be of ſervice to many. But its moſt wholeſome effects were felt among the Gentiles. The account, which we have in the Epiſtle to the Galatians leads us to ſuſpect, that the ſelf-righteous ſpirit had a very deep influence among ſome members of the Church at Jeruſalem. The Apoſtle Paul was obliged to exerciſe a particular caution among them, and to confer in private with the pillars of the Church, leſt he ſhould give umbrage to the Jewiſh Chriſtians, and hurt his own uſefulneſs among his countrymen†. In this he acted with equal prudence and charity: yet nothing could induce him to act inconſiſtently with the faith. To preſs the Gentile converts to Jewiſh conformity, appeared to him in this light, as no reaſons but thoſe of peace, charity, and prudential expediency could be pleaded for the continuance of ſuch obſervances even among Jews: and therefore, among Gentiles, who never had been under the yoke, no other conſtruction could be put on the practice, than that it was neceſſary to ſalvation, and that the primary doctrine of the Chriſtian religion, the ſufficiency of the blood of Chriſt for pardon of ſin, was diſbelieved. The ſame Apoſtle therefore, who, on another occaſion circumciſed Timothy ‡ becauſe of the Jews in the neighbourhood, he being by the mother's ſide of Hebrew extraction, now inſiſted, that Titus, a perfect Gentile, ſhould not be circumciſed,

* Acts xv. 31. and xvi. 5. † Gal. ii. ‡ Acts xvi. 3.

cumciſed *, becauſe of falſe brethren, who had craftily introduced themſelves among the Chriſtians, with a view to undermine their dependence on Jeſus, and to draw them back to the ſelf-righteouſneſs of Judaiſm. The liberty of Chriſt was what he was zealous to ſupport; and he would not, for an hour, allow any ſelf-righteous mixtures, "that the truth of the Goſpel might continue with them;" an expreſſion, which throws farther light on the controverſy we have reviewed; and ſhews diſtinctly, that not circumciſion itſelf, but the dependence on it for ſalvation in the room of Chriſt, was the great object of the Apoſtle's oppoſition.

He had hitherto found, to his ſatisfaction, that all his brethren of the Apoſtolic college had heartily concurred in checking the progreſs of ſelf-righteouſneſs. But a lamentable inſtance of human imbecility ſoon appeared. Peter, after having † taken a ſocial meal with ſome Gentile converts, afterwards withdrew from their company, on the arrival of certain Jewiſh zealots, who came to him from James: and thus, for fear of their cenſure, he durſt not keep company with men, whoſe fellowſhip he yet inwardly reverenced, and expected to enjoy in heaven. An error committed by a reſpectable character is infectious. Other Jews diſſembled in a ſimilar way:—even Barnabas was carried away with their diſſimulation, and the truth of the Goſpel was in danger of being forſaken on the authority of thoſe, who had hitherto upheld its ſtandard in the world. Such infirmities of the wiſe and good prove beyond doubt, to whom alone we are obliged for the preſervation of Chriſtian truth in the earth. The Lord rouſed the ſpirit of Paul on the occaſion: he vindicated

* Gal. ii. † Gal. ii. 12.

dicated the truth of the Goſpel by an open and manly rebuke of Peter: and a ſeaſonable check was put to the growing torrent of Phariſaiſm,—that dark but deadly foe of the Goſpel,—which, in one form or other, is ever ready to cloud the light of truth, and to ſap the foundation of Chriſtian peace and life.

St. Paul's fourth viſit to Jeruſalem is but juſt mentioned in ſcripture *. His fifth was attended with more memorable events. It was ſeen by the ſpirit of prophecy, that he would undergo bitter perſecution from the infidel Jews; and the guarded kindneſs, with which he was received by many, even of the believers there, formed no pleaſing inducement to him to repeat his viſits. But divine charity prevailed in St. Paul's mind over all objections, difficulties, and dangers: he rebuked his friends at Cæſarea, who diſſuaded him from proſecuting his journey, by profeſſing his readineſs "not only to be bound, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem, for the name of the Lord Jeſus †." His reſignation ſilenced them: "they ſaid, The will of the Lord be done." On his arrival he went to James, and, in the preſence of all the elders, recounted the work of God among the Gentiles. They glorified the Lord, and rejoiced ſincerely on the account: but at the ſame time they expreſſed what concern it gave them to find, how jealous of Paul the brethren were, having heard a falſe report of his teaching all the Jews to forſake the Moſaic obſervances. Doubtleſs he had not done this: but, he had done what diſpleaſed the Jewiſh zealots: he had inſiſted on the exemption of Gentiles from the yoke; and men, once out of humour, are diſpoſed to hearken to malevolent exaggerations. In this exigency the advice of James was at the ſame time prudent and charitable,

* Acts xviii. 22. † Acts xxi. 13.

able, namely, that he ſhould join with four men, who were bound by a Nazarite vow, in the cuſtomary ſervices of the temple, till a ſacrifice ſhould be offered for each of them. With this Paul concurred; and thus he gave the cleareſt proof that he was ready to conform both to Jew and Gentile in things indifferent, with a view to promote the ſalvation of men. A few remarks, ſuggeſted by theſe tranſactions, ſhall cloſe this chapter.

1. We ſee here that really there was no difference of ſentiment between Paul and James in religious opinions, as from a few * expreſſions in the epiſtle of the latter, ſome are glad to inſinuate. Theſe two Apoſtles, and indeed the whole college, were perfectly agreed in their views of the nature of the Goſpel.

2. In Peter there evidently was, in one inſtance, a duplicity of conduct with reſpect to the Moſaic rites,—in Paul a ſteady uniformity. He lived as a Jew himſelf: vows, ſynagogue-worſhip, and the various rites of the law he obſerved, not even ſacrifices excepted, on occaſion. He could not indeed look on them now in any other light than as branches of a human eſtabliſhment; ſince the death of Chriſt had annulled their divine authority. The eſtabliſhment itſelf he knew was ſoon to ceaſe by the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. To him and to the reſt of the Apoſtles it appeared more charitable, to ſubmit to the inconveniences of conformity, than to irritate the whole body of the Jews on account of circumſtantials. On this ground pious men in all ages have acted, and thoſe, who have moſt excelled in Chriſtian fruitfulneſs, have been moſt remarkable for their candour. At the ſame time the inflexible firmneſs of Paul in

* James ii. latter part.

in vindicating the doctrine of juſtification, by allowing on no account the circumciſion of Gentiles, informs us, where he laid the ſtreſs for ſalvation. This union of candour and firmneſs in the ſame perſon, acting variouſly in oppoſite circumſtances, has led ſome writers to accuſe him of inconſiſtency, who ſeem not to have underſtood the principles of the controverſy. This was the caſe of Jerom of old. His controverſy with Auguſtine on the ſubject is yet extant in the epiſtles of the latter, whoſe ſtatement of the affair I think perfectly juſt; and it is agreeable to the views in which the conduct of the Apoſtle has now been exhibited.

3. We ſee here how infinitely important the doctrine of juſtification is! What excellent fruits it had brought forth * in the Jewiſh Church, now conſiſting of many thouſands, has been ſhewn. It appears how naturally the human heart departs from the faith of Chriſt, before it is aware. The penetrating and zealous ſpirit of Paul was employed by the divine goodneſs to uphold ſtill the ſtandard of truth. Many, no doubt, received benefit from his example; but the glory of this Church was now on the decline.

4. The evil of bigotry is no leſs evident, and how naturally it connects itſelf with ſelf-righteouſneſs is apparent. An eager ſtreſs laid on any rite, or form, or external work whatever, eaſily thus degenerates. Stedfaſtneſs in the faith, and candour, and charity, are, under God, our preſervatives againſt it.

There was little opportunity of trying the effect of the charitable ſcheme, concerted between the two Apoſtles, on the minds of Chriſtians, becauſe

* Acts xxi 20.

becauſe before the ſeven days were expired, the malice of the infidel Jews broke out againſt Paul. St. Luke's narrative, from the twenty-firſt chapter to the end of his hiſtory, is ſpent on the conſequences of this. The cheerfulneſs, magnanimity, charity, and piety of the Apoſtle Paul: the convincing force of his reaſoning, which cauſed Felix to tremble, and Agrippa to confeſs himſelf almoſt a Chriſtian: his preſervation from Jewiſh malice by the privilege of Roman citizenſhip: the perils he underwent by ſea and land, till he arrived a priſoner at Rome, and his labours for two years in the miniſtry among them who viſited him in his impriſonment: theſe things are ſo circumſtantially, and, I may juſtly add, ſo beautifully related by the ſacred writer, that I ſhall refer my reader to him altogether, eſpecially as neither the hiſtory of the mother-church, nor of any other particular Churches, is connected with the account.

The malice of the Jews having failed of its object in Paul by his appeal to Cæſar, would gladly have gratified itſelf on James. But he, though no Roman citizen, was ſhielded by the lenity of the Roman government a little longer. His long reſidence at Jeruſalem, where he was ſtationary at leaſt for the moſt part, had given him an opportunity, by a blameleſs life, to abate the prejudice of his unbelieving countrymen, and to extort the tribute of praiſe from the populace in general. A. D. About the year of our Lord ſixty, he wrote his 60. Catholic epiſtle. It is addreſſed to Jews in general; ſometimes he ſpeaks to Chriſtians, ſometimes to Infidels, like a perſon well known, and of conſiderable influence among both. The covetouſneſs, inhumanity, and perſecuting ſpirit of the nation are deſcribed in ſtrong colours; and he writes like one who foreſees the ſpeedy deſolation

which was to overtake them. By the practical turn of his doctrine, by his descanting on the vices of the tongue*, of partiality to the rich, and of contemptuous treatment of the poor in Christian assemblies†, and by his direction against vain swearing‡, it is but too evident, that the Church had considerably declined from its original purity and simplicity; and that the crafts of Satan, aided ever by natural depravity, were wearing out apace the precious fruits of that effusion of the Spirit, which has been described. Such is the common course of things in all similar cases, within the like period of about thirty years. The Lord had not however forsaken his Church; though its members were in a persecuted state, and were brought before Jewish magistrates §, and vexed, so far as the rage of this infatuated nation had power to exert itself. He particularly exhorts them to patience under their trials, and a resignation to the Divine Will.

About the same time, or a little after, this Church was favoured with the epistle to the Hebrews, which seems to have been written by St. Paul ||.

As apostacy, partly through the fashionable and natural evil of self-righteousness, and partly through the cruelty of persecution, was the great evil to be feared among them, he directs them particularly to maintain the Christian faith. He largely and distinctly shews the accomplishment of all Mosaic types in Jesus. His priesthood, sacrifice, and intercession are amply described. The privileges and benefits of his salvation are distinctly

* Chap. iii. † Chap. ii. ‡ Chap. v. § Chap. ii. 6.

|| St. Peter, in his second epistle to the Jews, reminds them of St. Paul's letter to them, which, probably, could have been no other than this epistle.

tinctly ſtated. He exhorts them to conſtancy in the ſimple faith of Chriſt. He urges them to perſevere in ſupporting their Chriſtian aſſemblies, from which ſome* had declined, probably through fear of perſecution. He reminds them of the ſeverities they had patiently undergone after their firſt illumination, of the compaſſion which his ſufferings had excited among them, and of the cheerfulneſs with which they had ſuſtained the ſpoiling of their goods, from the confidence they "had of having in heaven a better and enduring ſubſtance." The whole turn of his exhortation ſhews, that they were in a ſtate of grievous moleſtation at the time of writing this epiſtle. And yet from their dulneſs in divine things, which he ſo warmly cenſures†, it is certain their ſpiritual taſte had declined. The perſecution of St. Paul at Jeruſalem probably excited a general hoſtility againſt the Church. That it did not proceed to blood‡, ſeems owing to no other cauſe than the protection of the Roman government. The Apoſtle is particularly earneſt in exhorting them to remember and hold faſt the grace of the Goſpel, which their firſt miniſters had taught them, and to conſider that Jeſus Chriſt was their great object, and that a return to Jewiſh dependencies would ruin their ſouls. On the whole, we have here the moſt glorious views of the Goſpel, and the moſt diſtinct information of the nature of a true adherence to it; though I ſee no evidence on the face of the epiſtle for concluding, that he forbad them that ſame occaſional and prudential compliance with Judaiſm in external obſervances, which all the Apoſtles practiſed. It was the departure of the HEART from the Lord Jeſus, againſt which he warned them. He dwells not largely on particular duties. He had not

* Heb. x. 25. † C. v. ver. 12. ‡ xii. 4.

not lived much among them; and ſpecial details of practical matters came better from the paſtoral pen of James.

Thus earneſtly did theſe two Apoſtles inſtruct and warn a declining Church. But grace has its ſeaſons! God will not always ſtrive with man; yet the uſe of the epiſtles will remain, till time ſhall be no more.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

JUDEA AND GALILEE.

THE Holy Land was divided into three provinces, JUDEA, GALILEE, and SAMARIA. This laſt was in a ſituation ſo peculiar, as to deſerve to be conſidered diſtinctly. And of the Churches of the two former I have not much more to ſay, than that their ſtate, by fair analogy, may be eſtimated from that of the mother-church. Indeed a ſtrong foundation had been laid for their converſion by the miniſtry of John the Baptiſt, and by that of our Lord in the days of his fleſh. The angel Gabriel had foretold of the ſon of Zacharias, "that many of the children of Iſrael he ſhould turn to the Lord their God*." Repentance was HIS theme, and by this he prepared the way of the Lord. Jeſus himſelf condeſcended in his ſubordinate capacity of prophet and teacher to purſue the ſame method, though no regular Churches were yet formed. He promiſed that the gift of the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be vouchſafed to his diſciples, and we have ſeveral intimations†, that a greater degree of ſucceſs, of purity, of knowledge, and of glory, ſhould, attend his religion after he ſhould leave this world, than during his perſonal miniſtry ‡.

Judea

* Luke i. 2. † John xiv. and xvi.

‡ Let this account, once for all, for the much greater uſe which I make of the Acts and of the Epiſtles, than of the four Goſpels. Theſe laſt are indeed inеſtimable; bnt their uſes are of another kind, and fall not within the plan of this work.

Judea and Galilee being thus prepared for the Goſpel, the bleſſed tidings began to be ſpread through them, and to be attended with rapid ſucceſs, ſoon after the firſt perſecution which aroſe concerning Stephen. Thoſe, who had felt the flame of Divine Love in Jeruſalem, being obliged to flee, preached through theſe regions, and many thouſands were converted, as we have ſeen. The mother-church, no doubt, was the moſt numerous, but various Churches in the country muſt have contributed to make up the ſum. The ſmall ſize of Paleſtine may tempt ſome to wonder, if many thouſands became Chriſtians, how the main body of the nation could yet remain in infidelity. The amazing populouſneſs and fertility of the country accounts for this. The number of populous towns, in Galilee particularly, is aſtoniſhing, as appears from Joſephus's narrative of the Jewiſh war. The ſingle town of Gadara, near the lake of Gennezaret, by no means a town of the firſt magnitude, maintained two thouſand ſwine *. If then the importance of regions be meaſured by the number of inhabitants, rather than by the extent of ground, this ſmall country might vie perhaps with modern Ruſſia.

Of theſe Churches the firſt inſtruments were not the Apoſtles themſelves, though they doubtleſs viſited them afterwards, and confirmed them. James the ſon of Zebedee would not confine his labours to Jeruſalem, till the time of his martyrdom, no more than the reſt of the twelve, if perhaps we except James the ſon of Alpheus, who was the firſt ſtanding Paſtor of Jeruſalem.

Theſe Churches, moſt probably, followed the example of the parent-church, both in its firſt love and comfortable progreſs, and alſo in its unhappy declenſion.

* Mark v. 15.

declenſion. Peter's activity in eſtabliſhing them was very conſpicuous. "The Lord wrought effectually" in him for the converſion of the Jews all along*. He paſſed through all quarters, and viſited the places moſt remote from the capital, ſuch as Lydda, Saron, and Joppa†. In all theſe places the Spirit of God accompanied his work. It was in this laſt city that the Lord by him raiſed Tabitha from the dead. I ſhould ſcarce have mentioned this miracle, in a work which profeſſes all along to record the ordinary, not the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghoſt, were not the woman diſtinguiſhed by "her good works and alms-deeds which ſhe did." All the widows ſtood by Peter weeping, and ſhewing the "coats and garments which ſhe had made, while ſhe was with them." Thus had this woman's faith evidenced itſelf by good works; and the Spirit of piety and of prayer had gone hand in hand with that of induſtrious beneficence. Hail, Tabitha! thou haſt the higheſt glory, and of the moſt ſolid kind, which is attainable on earth! But the reader ſees how ſimple and low Chriſtian exploits muſt appear in the eyes of worldly men. They are not like the ſwelling deeds of heroes and ſtateſmen, which have hitherto, for the moſt part, monopolized the hiſtoric page. But the perſons who are influenced by the Spirit of Chriſt, with Tabitha will yet know with whom they would wiſh to be numbered. The female ſex, almoſt excluded from civil hiſtory, will appear perhaps more conſpicuous in eccleſiaſtical. Leſs immerſed in ſecular concerns, and leſs haughty and independent in ſpirit, they ſeem, in all ages, to have had their full proportion, or more than the other ſex, of the grace of the Goſpel.

* Gal. ii. 8. † Acts ix.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

SAMARIA.

THIS country lay in the midſt between Judea and Galilee, though diſtinguiſhed from them both in its polity and religion. The inhabitants poſſeſſed a large part of the diſtrict, which had belonged to the ten tribes, whom the kings of Aſſyria had carried into captivity. Theſe conquerors had filled their vacant place with various coloniſts*, who mixed the worſhip of Jehovah with their idols, vainly boaſted of their relation to Jacob†, profeſſed to regard the law of Moſes, and deſpiſed or at leaſt depreciated the reſt of the Old Teſtament. Our Saviour clearly decides the conteſt, which, for ages, had been carried on between them and the Jews, in favour of the latter‡. But though the Samaritan was an idolater in his very foundation, yet in moral practice he appears not worſe than the Jew. Both, indeed, were at this time extremely corrupt, and gloried in cheriſhing an enmity, which forbad them the exerciſe of common humanity to one another.

The Divine Saviour pitied this people. He viſited them himſelf§, and ſome ſinners were converted. He made a ſecond attempt‖, but the bigotry of the village to which he approached, prevented them from receiving him there, a circumſtance, which excited the fiery zeal of the two ſons of Zebedee, and gave occaſion to our Lord to ſay, "The Son of Man is not come to deſtroy men's

* 2 Kings xvii. † John iv. 12. ‡ John iv. 22.
§ John iv. ‖ Luke ix. 52.

men's lives, but to ſave them." He meekly bore the repulſe, and went to another village. But the effuſions of his kindneſs toward this unhappy people were now to appear in abundance.

Among the ſeven deacons the next perſon to Stephen, in zeal and activity, was Philip. Driven from Jeruſalem by the perſecution, he was directed to go to the city of Samaria, perhaps to the ſame city called Sychar, where our Lord had converſed with the woman over Jacob's well. There he preached Chriſt, and the Goſpel entered the hearts of many, ſo "that there was great joy in that city *." The inhabitants appear to have been a very ignorant ſimple people, but now that the Spirit of God was poured upon them, none received the Goſpel with more cordial pleaſure One effect immediately appeared, which indeed never fails to attend the hearty reception of the Goſpel. Superſtition and diabolical deluſions vaniſhed. A perſon, named Simon, had deceived this people with ſorceries; I dare not ſay with pretended ſorceries: We ſhall ſee ſufficient proof, before we have done with the apoſtolical hiſtory, that ſorcery was a real thing. For a long time they had been infatuated; but Philip's doctrine expelled their regard for theſe things, and numbers of both ſexes were baptized. Simon himſelf, though a ſtranger to the nature and power of Chriſt's religion, was yet convinced, that Chriſtianity in general was true; and this ſeems the juſt idea of a mere hiſtorical believer.

The Apoſtles hearing of the happy reception of the Goſpel at Samaria, ſent down Peter and John, who prayed on the behalf of the people, that the Holy Ghoſt might be imparted through the impoſition of hands. The Spirit was communicated, not only in extraordinary gifts, but alſo in an effuſion of the

* Acts viii. 8.

the ſame holy graces, which had appeared in Judea. The former were thoſe alone, which attracted the attention of Simon. His avaricious heart immediately conceiving the proſpect of vaſt wealth to be acquired, were he once poſſeſſed of this ſupernatural power, he offered the Apoſtles a ſum of money for the communication of the ſecret. Peter, who ſaw diſtinctly both his covetouſneſs and his ignorance, rebuked him in the ſevereſt manner, aſſured him that his heart was wrong altogether, and his ſtate accurſed, notwithſtanding his baptiſm and profeſſion of Chriſtianity. At the ſame time he exhorted him to repent and to ſeek the divine forgiveneſs. Here we ſee how ſingularly remote the religion of Jeſus is from all worldly plans and ſchemes, and what an awful difference there ever is between a real and a nominal Chriſtian. The conſcience of Simon felt the reproof: he begged the Apoſtles' prayers; but it does not appear that he prayed for himſelf. Peter and John preached through many Samaritan villages, and then returned to Jeruſalem.

The Samaritans, a ſort of half Jews,—for they were all circumciſed,—being favoured with the ſame ſpiritual bleſſings as the reſt, the minds of Chriſtians were prepared to expect a ſimilar extenſion of heavenly grace to uncircumciſed idolaters. And among the wonders of divine love which we have reviewed, theſe are pleaſing circumſtances, that Jews and Samaritans, who, for ages, had diſagreed in rites, ſhould now be united in Jeſus; and while each felt the ſame obligations to grace, ſhould have learned mutual charity for the firſt time.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

ETHIOPIA*.

IT is inſtructive to obſerve, by what gentle degrees the goodneſs of God was preparing the way for the general diffuſion of his grace in the world. The firſt Chriſtians, even the Apoſtles themſelves, were by no means diſpoſed to think with any particular compaſſion of Gentiles, and would ſcarce have thought of ſpreading the Goſpel beyond the bounds of their own nation, had not the perſecution driven many out of Jeruſalem. The teachers themſelves needed to be taught of God in this part of their office. So helpleſs is man in divine things, even after he has been favoured with ſome ſpiritual light, that by freſh communications alone, he can be induced to make any additional improvement. After Philip had finiſhed his work at Samaria, he was, by an extraordinary commiſſion, ordered to travel ſouthward toward the deſert. He ſooon diſcovered the reaſon: he fell in with an Ethiopian eunuch, a miniſter of Candace Queen of the Ethiopians, who had been worſhiping at Jeruſalem, and was returning home in his chariot. Men, who feel the worth of their ſouls, will not be unemployed when alone. Their concern for their beſt intereſts will operate moſt powerfully,

* The Ethiopia to which this chapter is confined, ſeems to be that part of the country, whoſe metropolis is called Meroe, ſituated in a large iſland, encompaſſed by the Nile and the rivers of Aſtapus and Aſtoborra: For in theſe parts (as the elder Pliny informs us) Queens had a long time governed under the title of Candace. See Cave's Life of Philip.

powerfully, when they are moſt diſengaged from buſineſs. The man was reading the prophet Eſaias, and the adorable Providence of God had directed him at that particular time to the fifty-third chapter, which gives ſo clear a deſcription of Chriſt crucified. Philip aſked him, if he underſtood what he was reading. The man confeſſing his ignorance, deſired Philip to come and ſit with him. The Evangeliſt took the opportunity of expounding to him the Goſpel from the paſſage he was then reading, which at once lays open the guilty and the miſerable ſtate of man, his recovery only by the grace of Jeſus Chriſt, the nature, end, and efficacy of his death and reſurrection, and juſtification before God by the knowledge of the ſame Jeſus and by HIS merits. The Ethiopian's mind had been prepared for the doctrine: he had been at the pains to attend Jewiſh inſtructions, the beſt then to be had in the world, except the Chriſtian, which he now heard, for the firſt time; nor had the ſcandalous wickedneſs of the Jewiſh nation hindered him from attending that worſhip, which he believed to be of Divine Origin. The ignorance of his own country ſuited not even the weakeſt and moſt glimmering light of a ſerious mind. His caſe is an encouragement for men, however ignorant and miſtaken at preſent, to ſeek earneſtly to God, for HE will take care that they ſhall find. The man felt himſelf guilty and wicked, and the views of the prophetical chapter before us, laid open by the preacher, diſcovered to him the remedy, which it pleaſed God ſo powerfully to apply to his heart, that as ſoon as they came to a certain water, he deſired to be baptized. Philip aſſured him that there was no impediment, if he was ſincere in the faith of Chriſt. On which he profeſſed his belief, that the Jeſus of Nazareth, whom Philip had preached

preached to him, was indeed the Son of God propheſied of by Iſaiah, and that he anſwered the character of Saviour there given to him. Philip then baptized the Ethiopian, who, though his inſtructor was, by the Spirit of the Lord, immediately taken from him, went on his way into his own country rejoicing*. Doubtleſs this joy had a ſolid and powerful cauſe; and if this caſe be compared with that of the three thouſand firſt converts, and both of them with the doctrine of the fifty-third chapter of Iſaiah, converſion will appear to be a ſpiritual internal work, humbling men for ſin, and comforting them with forgiveneſs by Chriſt. The nominal profeſſion, with which great numbers of perſons content themſelves, may ſeem to fit them for little elſe, than to diſgrace Chriſtianity by their practice.

It is impoſſible that the Ethiopian, thus powerfully enlightened and rejoicing in God, could be ſilent, when he returned home. His influence and character would at leaſt ſecure to him a reſpectful attention from ſome of his countrymen; and thus the Goſpel, moſt probably, was firſt planted in Ethiopia. But we have no more ſcripture-light on the ſubject.

* Acts viii.

CHAP. V.

CÆSAREA.

THE great mixture of Jews and Gentiles in ſome of the extreme parts of the Holy Land or its neighbourhood, afforded a providential opportunity for the gradual illumination of the latter, for the abatement of Jewiſh bigotry, for the demonſtration of Divine Grace in the ſalvation of all ſorts of men, and for the union of Chriſtian hearts. Thus we find that a Church was planted at Tyre, another at Ptolemais*, places which muſt have abounded with Gentiles. But Cæſarea affords the moſt remarkable inſtance of the obſervation juſt now made. It was the reſidence of the Roman Governor, and was ſo ſituated in the confines of Syria and Judea, that it was a matter of doubt to which region it ought to be aſſigned. And the final determination of this queſtion in favour of the Syrians is mentioned by Joſephus, as one of the immediate cauſes of the war, which ended with the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. This circumſtance ſhews the great importance of this city, and the ſtrong intereſt which both parties had in it.

Philip, after a laborious journey from Azotus, preaching in all the cities, through which he paſſed, ſettled at length in Cæſarea. Here he was ſtationary for many years†. We find him, toward the concluſion of the period of about thirty years, which takes in the hiſtory of the Acts, ſtill fixed in the ſame place, with four virgin daughters, where he entertained St.

* Acts xxi. † Acts viii. 40. all compared with xxi. 8.

St. Paul in his laſt journey to Jeruſalem. I can no more conceive Philip to have been idle and unfruitful all this time, than James to have been ſo at Jeruſalem. A Church, mixed of Jews and Gentiles would naturally be formed under ſo zealous a paſtor, whoſe obſervation of the Grace of God in the caſe of the eunuch, muſt have opened his mind to an affectionate reception of Gentile converts.

Indeed the abuſe, which the malignant pride of the Jews had made of the Moſaic prohibition of intercourſe with Gentiles, was a great bar to the extenſion of the Goſpel. They refuſed to keep company with foreigners, and ſeem to have looked on them as devoted to deſtruction. The Apoſtles themſelves were, as yet, under the power of the ſame bigotry, till a viſion from heaven inſtructed Peter, as he was praying on the houſe-top at Joppa, that he ought not to call any man common or unclean *. By this he was prepared for the work which the Lord was immediately aſſigning him. The Holy Spirit ſuggeſted to him that three men were at that time enquiring for him, and directed him to go with them; "for I have ſent them†." Peter was ſoon informed by the men, that they had been ſent to him from Cæſarea‡ by Cornelius, a Roman centurion there, a devout

* Acts x.

† The proper perſonality and divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, and the unlimited ſubjection due to him from Chriſtian paſtors, and, of courſe, from all Chriſtians, are ſolidly deducible from this and various ſimilar paſſages in the Acts of the Apoſtles.

‡ Much has been written concerning two ſorts of Proſelytes to the Jewiſh religion, circumciſed ones, and incomplete ones, called Proſelytes of the Gate. Two learned critics, Dr. Lardner and Dr. Doddridge, ſeem to have ſhewn, however, that the latter had no exiſtence. Cornelius was a Gentile altogether, and was treated as ſuch by the Jews, though from his pious attention to the Jewiſh religion he muſt have been at leaſt a Proſelyte

a devout man, and one that feared God with all his family, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway; who had been warned from God by an holy angel to ſend for him.—Peter lodged the three men that night: two of them were houſhold ſervants, and the third—rare character!—a devout ſoldier, who waited on the centurion continually.

On the next day Peter went with them, but had the precaution to take with him ſix Jewiſh Chriſtians from Joppa as witneſſes of his proceedings. The following day they entered Cæſarea, and came into the houſe of Cornelius, who had called together his kinſmen and near friends, with that charity for their ſouls, which fails not to influence the minds of thoſe, who have real charity for their own. On the entrance of Peter he falls down and worſhips. Peter corrects his miſtaken devotion. Cornelius informs him, that having been particularly engaged in faſting and prayer, he was aſſured by an angel that his prayers and alms were acceptable to God, and that he had obeyed the divine direction in ſending for him. Peter now preached the Goſpel to the company, frankly owning, that he was at length fully convinced, that God was no reſpecter of perſons; but that he equally regarded Jew and Gentile, whoever the perſon was that "feared God, and wrought righteouſneſs." On this broad baſis of encouragement, he was enabled to preach to them the good news of forgiveneſs of ſins by Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe hiſtory they knew, though they did not underſtand the nature of his doctrine. He directed them now to receive that doctrine cordially for their peace with God. The perfect holineſs

ſelyte of the ſecond ſort, if any ever were ſo. In that caſe it ſeems difficult to conceive, why any Jew ſhould have made ſuch a difficulty of converſing with perſons of this deſcription.

holineſs and the ſupernatural works of Jeſus, he obſerved, demonſtrated him to be no impoſtor, but ſent of God unqueſtionably: that he himſelf and the other Apoſtles were witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection, and had received a commiſſion from him to preach to the people, and to urge men's acceptance of him here, if ever they expected to be welcomed by him, when he ſhould judge the quick and dead at his ſecond coming: and that all the prophets had teſtified, that whoever placed his confidence for ſalvation in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould receive remiſſion of ſins.

Few words ſuffice, where God himſelf powerfully works. The whole company were converted to God. The Holy Ghoſt, both in an extraordinary and in an ordinary way, ſealed the Apoſtle's ſermon. The Jewiſh brethren were aſtoniſhed to find Gentiles put on an equal footing with Jews. Peter, after obſerving how unreaſonable it would be to deny baptiſm to perſons who had received the Holy Ghoſt, no leſs than themſelves, baptized the whole company; and at their deſire ſpent a few days with them, to inſtruct them farther in Chriſtian principles; and then left them to the care of Philip, whoſe character at Cæſarea would, probably, from this time increaſe in public eſteem.

A remark or two on this important tranſaction will be proper.

1. The Grace of God acts very variouſly in converting ſinners. There are conſiderable ſhades of difference in the caſes of Saul, of the Eunuch, and of Cornelius. The preaching of the Goſpel found the firſt a determined enemy, the ſecond an ignorant enquirer, the third a regenerate perſon already, though with no more than the Old Teſtament-light. But to all theſe different caſes, the doctrine itſelf is the ſame: and the work of God in humbling man for his ſins, and leading him to Chriſt alone for juſtification, is the ſame alſo.

2. How neceſſary is it, that the way of peace by Chriſt alone be diſtinctly explained and underſtood! Cornelius, with an enlightened mind and a tender conſcience, unleſs he had underſtood the doctrine of forgiveneſs by the blood of the Redeemer, would never have found peace of conſcience. Imperfection ſtill attending his beſt actions, he muſt have remained miſerable in his ſpirit. The doctrine of forgiveneſs, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, brought him at once to a peace before unknown. How careful ſhould we be to underſtand this doctrine aright! how zealous, in proportion to our ability, to tranſmit the precious jewel to poſterity!

3. How narrow are the hearts of men! how circumſcribed the charity even of the beſt! With difficulty even Chriſtian Jews are brought to admit as brethren the Gentile converts. Self-righteouſneſs is natural to mankind. That God ſhould receive as his children idolatrous Gentiles, as well as religious Jews, provokes the pride of narrow-minded ſelfiſh men, who have long been accuſtomed to conſider themſelves as the peculiar favourites of heaven.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

ANTIOCH AND SOME OTHER ASIATIC CHURCHES.

WE have not yet ſeen all the good effects which Providence brought out of Stephen's perſecution. Though the Apoſtles thought it their duty to continue to water the flocks of Judea and Galilee, and to look on Jeruſalem as a ſort of central metropolis to them all, they encouraged the inferior paſtors, who fled from the rage of perſecution, to diſſeminate the Goſpel in Gentile regions. Damaſcus, we have ſeen, reaped the benefit of this diſpenſation, and ſo did Tarſus. Some travelled as far as Phenice, Cyrus, and Antioch, ſtill preaching only to Jews. At length certain Cypriot and Cyrenian Jews ventured to break through the pale of diſtinction: and at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, they preached the Lord Jeſus to the Gentiles. The Greek language here prevailed, and, on this account, the inhabitants were called Grecians*, being the deſcendants of a Macedonian colony, planted there by the ſucceſſor of Alexander. And now the Lord, willing to overcome effectually the reluctances of ſelf-righteous bigotry, attended their miniſtry with remarkable ſucceſs. The idolaters felt the renovating power of the Goſpel, and in great numbers turned to the Lord. The mother-church hearing of this, ſent Barnabas, whoſe piety and charity were renowned, to carry on and propagate a work, which required more labourers. His benevolent heart

* Acts xi. 20.

heart was feaſted with the proſpect; and the reality of ſalvation by the grace of Chriſt thus exemplified in perſons, who had hitherto been involved in pagan darkneſs, was evidenced in a manner which, till then, had never been known before. Finding many converts, he exhorted them to perſeverance; and the addition of believers was ſtill ſo large, that he began to look out for a coadjutor. He ſought for Saul, who was then labouring at Tarſus perhaps with no great ſucceſs: we are told of none at leaſt; "for a prophet is not honoured in his own country;" and he brought him to Antioch. This populous city employed them a whole year. Here Chriſtian ſocieties were regularly formed, conſiſting, in a great meaſure, of Gentiles. And here the followers of Chriſt were firſt called Chriſtians. It is not probable, that they would give themſelves that name. The terms BRETHREN, ELECT, FAITHFUL, SAINTS, were the names which they would rather approve. The name of Chriſtian ſeems to have been given by their adverſaries. It is now a term of honour: at that time a more opprobrious one could ſcarcely be thought of by the learned and the polite. Were a man allowed to poſſeſs many good qualities; "but he is a Chriſtian," would have been deemed more than a counterbalance to them all. And other terms invented by the malevolence of unregenerate men, in different ages, to ſtigmatize the ſame ſort of perſons, have produced, by the bare ſound, ſimilar effects on prejudiced minds.

The faith of the Antiochians was ſignally operative. Warmed with the love of Chriſt, and rejoicing in the proſpect of heavenly treaſures, they cheerfully contributed to the relief of the poor Chriſtians in Judea, diſtreſſed by a famine. A large extenſion of Chriſt's kingdom in any place,

place, naturally calls together a large number of paſtors. It is pleaſant indeed to labour among the faithful, encircled with ſincere friends. It is not every real ſaint, who has the fortitude and charity to quit ſo agreeable a ſcene, for the ſake of breaking up freſh ground. How much longer theſe teachers would have remained at Antioch, if left to themſelves, we know not. But the Holy Ghoſt now ſelected Barnabas and Saul for other labours. They obeyed the call; and Seleucia in the neighbourhood was their firſt deſtination. At this port they found a convenient paſſage to the fertile and pleaſureable Iſland of Cyprus. Methinks the evil ſpirits, who there ſupported the religious rites and the ſenſual practices of the devotees of Venus, began to tremble for this capital ſcene of their dominions.

From Salamis, the eaſtern point of the Iſland, to Paphos the weſtern, they ſpread the glad tidings of the Goſpel. In this laſt place they found Elymas, a Jewiſh ſorcerer and falſe prophet, in company with Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of the Iſland, a man of ſenſe and candour, who ſent for Barnabas and Saul, and deſired to hear the word of God. The ſorcerer endeavoured to prevent the good effects of their labours; till Paul, full of holy indignation at his diabolical malice, was enabled miraculouſly to ſtrike him blind for a ſeaſon. Sergius was aſtoniſhed, we are told, "at the doctrine" of the Lord*, and commenced a Chriſtian from that hour.

The

* Acts xiii. 12. The expreſſion is remarkable, but has a peculiar propriety. A mere hiſtorical believer would have been aſtoniſhed at the miracle merely. Sergius, a true convert, who entered into the holy nature of the Goſpel by a ſpiritual perception, is aſtoniſhed "at the doctrine."

The two Apoſtles ſailed now to the adjoining continent, and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. And here John Mark, who had thus far attended them as miniſter, left them and returned to Jeruſalem. It was, perhaps, more agreeable to him to profeſs and practiſe Chriſtianity at home with his mother and friends, than to expoſe himſelf to heathens. Even then, traces of the love of the world were to be ſeen among Chriſtians.

Piſidia, lying to the north of Pamphylia, was the next ſcene. Here was another Antioch; and the Apoſtles on the Sabbath-day attended the Jewiſh ſynagogue. After the uſual reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers gave them a friendly invitation to exhort the people, which Paul embraced with his uſual zeal. His ſermon is much of the ſame ſtrain with thoſe of Peter and of Stephen, tending to beget in the hearers a conviction of ſinfulneſs, and to give teſtimony to Jeſus, concluding with a remarkably plain declaration of the grand doctrine of juſtification by faith in Jeſus only, and a ſolemn warning againſt the dreadful conſequences of hardneſs of heart, and of contempt of the Divine meſſage. The Gentiles, powerfully impreſſed with the news, deſired to hear more of the ſubject the next Sabbath. Many Jews and proſelytes were converted; and the whole city almoſt came on the next Sabbath-day to hear *. The ſight was too much for the envy of the infidel Jews, who oppoſed Paul with all their might. The two Apoſtles boldly aſſured them, that though it was their duty to carry the news of ſalvation to the Jews firſt, yet as they deſpiſed God's Gift of Eternal Life, it would now be offered to the Gentiles, agreeably to the glorious prophecy of Iſaiah †, where the experimental influence

* Acts xiii. 44. † 49th Chap.

fluence of the Goſpel on Gentile hearts is clearly deſcribed. The Pagans, not ſo proud as the Jews, felt that they had no righteouſneſs to plead before God, thankfully embraced the Goſpel, and believed in great numbers.

Piſidia was now full of the Goſpel; and the Apoſtles proceeded with vaſt ſucceſs, till a perſecution, ſtirred up by the Jews, induced ſome ſelf-righteous women of rank, in conjunction with the magiſtrates, to drive them out of their coaſts. From thence they came to Iconium, the northern extremity of the country; and the diſciples whom they left, though haraſſed with perſecution, were yet "filled with Joy and the Holy Ghoſt." The internal conſolation of their religion ſupported their ſouls. In Iconium the two Apoſtles continued a long time, and delivered the meſſage of Divine Reconciliation with much freedom and energy, to the converſion of a great multitude both of Jews and Gentiles. The unbelieving Jews* exerted their uſual malevolence, and filled the Gentiles with the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt the Chriſtians. In truth, their conduct, though by no means uncommon, affords a dreadful inſtance of human depravity. It cannot be denied, that thoſe Jews muſt in religious knowledge have far exceeded the idolatrous inhabitants of Iconium. They held the Unity of the Godhead; they worſhipped him in their ſynagogue; they heard his precepts from Sabbath to Sabbath out of the law of Moſes and the prophets. They muſt have known thus far, that the Meſſiah was foretold in the latter, and they could not but be acquainted with their duty both to God and man in many reſpects by means of the former. Yet ſo unreaſonable are they, as to labour to prevent their pagan neighbours

* Acts xiv.

neighbours from being inſtructed in any thing that deſerved the name of religion, and to perſecute with unceaſing acrimony two of their own countrymen, who agreed with them in the profeſſion of the worſhip of the one living and true God. Of ſo little influence is what ſome call the "Unitarian" religion, if it be UNCONNECTED with the Knowledge and Love of Jeſus Chriſt. Perſons, who make THAT the whole of their religion, can, it ſeems, rather ſee mankind remain buried in the depths of the moſt ſenſeleſs idolatry in worſhip, and of vicious profligacy in life, than brought over to the real Chriſtian religion, to the hearty renunciation of their own righteouſneſs, and to a humble dependence on the atoning blood of Jeſus! The preaching of Paul and Barnabas excited a variety of ſpeculations in this city. The Gentiles were divided; and part ranged themſelves with the Jews, and part with the Apoſtles. But the former had the advantage for the preſent, becauſe they had the arms,—which Chriſtian ſoldiers cannot uſe—of violence and perſecution.

The Apoſtles, aware of their deſigns, fled into Lycaonia, a country to the eaſt of Piſidia; and there preached the Goſpel, particularly in Lyſtra and Derbe. In the former of theſe places, a poor cripple, who never had had the uſe of his feet, heard Paul with the moſt reſpectable attention, and was ſo far wrought upon already in his mind, as to believe, that there was virtue in the name of Jeſus Chriſt to heal him. To confirm him in his yet infant views of the Chriſtian religion, to atteſt the truth, and to convince men that Jeſus was both able and willing to SAVE, Paul was enabled by a word to reſtore the man to the full uſe of his limbs. Immediately theſe poor idolaters concluded,

cluded, that the gods were come down to them in the likeneſs of men. Through this whole country of Aſia Minor, the Greek literature, and with it the numerous fables of Helleniſtic vanity, abounded. They had heard of Jupiter and Mercury particularly as viſiting mankind; and now Barnabas, as the elder perhaps, and more majeſtic figure of the two, muſt, they conceived, be Jupiter; and Paul, as the more eloquent ſpeaker, muſt be Mercury, the claſſical god of eloquence. The prieſt of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and, together with the people, would have done ſacrifice to the Apoſtles. It was a grievous circumſtance; but our grief and regret is mitigated, when we reflect that one of the fineſt opportunities was given to Paul and to Barnabas of demonſtrating the ſpirit of real godlineſs However pleaſing it might be to corrupt nature to receive the idolatrous* homage of a deluded people, nothing could be more abhorrent from the nature of the Goſpel itſelf, and from the humble character of its teachers. They could not bear the ſight: they rent their clothes; and ran in among the people, and expoſtulated with them on the abſurdity of their conduct; aſſuring them that they were no more than frail men like themſelves, and that their intention in preaching to them was, to turn them from theſe vanities to the living God, who formerly indeed had left all nations to follow their own ways, but now had ſent HIS ſervants to preach a method of ſalvation from ſuch idolatries. Not that the worſhip of falſe gods was excuſable; the

* The hiſtorical reader can ſcarcely fail to contraſt with this behaviour of the Apoſtles the ambitious arts of Jeſuit miſſionaries, and to regret the want of a ſimilar piety and integrity in a late celebrated naval commander in a ſcene of trial of the ſame kind, which happened a little before his lamented cataſtrophe.

the conſtant benefits of Providence calling for thankfulneſs, and pointing out the Supreme Creator to the conſciences of men. Thus faithfully did they preach conviction of ſin to the Lycaonians, and with difficulty prevent the actual performance of the ſacrifice, which would have given them more pain than the perſecution that followed.

The fickle multitude, who had ſo recently been even idolatrouſly attached to Paul and Barnabas, were ſoon perſuaded by ſome Jews, who came from Antioch and Iconium, to harbour the worſt opinion of them; and doubtleſs the diſlike of ſecular glory, which theſe excellent Apoſtles, with a truly Chriſtian ſpirit, ſhewed on all occaſions, would not a little contribute to increaſe this alienation of mind. In a tumult Paul was ſtoned and dragged out of the city, as a dead corpſe; and while the diſciples ſtood round about him, he roſe up, and came into the city, miraculouſly reſtored, it may ſeem: and he departed the next day with Barnabas to Derbe. There many were converted; and the perſecuting ſpirit intermitting, they viſited again, in circuit, the regions of Piſidia and Lycaonia, encouraging the diſciples to perſevere in the faith of Jeſus in confidence of divine ſupport, and in full expectation of the kingdom of heaven, into which real Chriſtians muſt not expect to enter without much tribulation.

They now ordained ſome of the brethren to miniſter in every Church, and devoutly recommended both paſtors and flocks to the care of that gracious Lord on whom they believed: Solemn faſting and prayer were uſed on this occaſion. Returning through Pamphylia, they preached again at Perga, and from Attalia ſailed to the great Antioch, whence they had been, by the prayers of the Church, recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.

Here

Here they remained a conſiderable time previous to their attendance at the council of Jeruſalem, after which they returned to the ſame Church in company with Judas and Silas, who, with authority from the mother-church, confirmed them in the liberty of the Goſpel, in conjunction with many other teachers. The Chriſtians of Antioch walked now in genuine conſolation, and while they dared to reſt on Chriſt alone, they practiſed good works in a filial ſpirit. Thankful for the aſſiſtance of Judas and Silas, they diſmiſſed them to the Apoſtles who had ſent them*. Silas, however, loved his ſituation, and remained in the ſervice of the Gentiles.

Some days after Paul propoſed to Barnabas a ſecond circuitous viſit of the Aſiatic Churches. Barnabas, fond of Mark his nephew, propoſed to take him with them. Paul, remembering his former deſertion, thought him unfit for the work. On which ſide there was more blame in this conteſt may be hard to determine. Probably both were too poſitive; but to us at this diſtance of time Paul's view of the queſtion ſeems the more juſt. The conſequence was a ſeparation between theſe two Chriſtian leaders; and it does not appear that they ever ſaw one another after, though it ought not ~~be to~~ doubted, but that, on the whole, their mutual eſteem and regard continued: the beſt men are but men. The progreſs of the Goſpel was not, however, retarded. Barnabas ſailed with Mark to Cyprus, and here he is diſmiſſed from the ſacred memoirs. Paul took with him Silas, having the recommendation of the brethren to the Grace of God, which would lead one to conclude, that the Antiochians preferred his cauſe to that of Barnabas.

* Acts xv. 33.

Barnabas. He now went through Syria and Silicia, confirming the Churches.

In Lycaonia he found the pious Timothy, whom he took as an aſſociate, and confirmed the Gentile converts every where in Chriſtian liberty: Thus the Churches were eſtabliſhed in the faith, and increaſed in number daily.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

GALATIA.

THE Love of God, where it rules in an ardent degree, is inſatiable. The Apoſtle's heart is not content with the trophies already erected in many parts of Aſia Minor. As the miſer thinks no acquiſitions great, while any proſpects of farther gain are ſtill open to his view, ſo Paul could not with complacency reſt in the attainments already made, while ſo much ground ſtill lay before him, to the north and to the weſt, in the hands of Satan. He travelled throughout Phrygia and Galatia *. The plantation of the Churches in the former country will afterwards engage our attention; the latter, whoſe hiſtory in point of time is much ſooner concluded in ſacred ſtory, will be now moſt conveniently exhibited. The epiſtle written to that Church affords us almoſt the only materials we have; but little as they are, they are ineſtimable. I am entirely convinced by Dr. Lardner †, that this was an early epiſtle, and by no means dated from Rome, as the ſubſcription at the end of the epiſtle intimates. Nor is this the only place in which thoſe ſubſcriptions, which the unlearned reader ſhould know make no part of the Apoſtolical writings, deceive us.

The people of this country received the Goſpel in great numbers, inſomuch that ſeveral Churches were planted through the diſtrict. They underſtood St. Paul's doctrine, and received it in its true ſenſe, namely, that juſtification before God is attainable only by faith in Chriſt crucified. He clearly

* Acts xvi. 6. † See his Supplement.

clearly laid before them the riches of Divine Grace. And they had ſo deep an impreſſion of the truths, which he taught, and felt ſo much of their energy, that they ſeemed as it were to ſee the Son of God crucified among them *: they received the promiſed Spirit of adoption, by which they rejoiced in God as their Father †, and they cheerfully ſuffered much perſecution for the name of Chriſt ‡. Before this, they had lived in the darkeſt idolatry; for theſe Churches were formed almoſt, if not entirely, of Gentiles §. The true God was made known to them, and Unitarianiſm, of itſelf unable to emancipate men from ſin, as the caſe of the Jews evinced, was with them attended with the diſtinct knowledge and lively faith of Jeſus.

What proves the divine taſte of this people was, that no diſadvantage in the circumſtances of the delivery of the Goſpel operated with them to its prejudice. Some remarkable infirmity this great man was afflicted with; — what it was preciſely we are no where told; — but it preſented ſomething contemptible in the eyes of profane perſons. And it is no ſmall proof of the Galatians being much humbled and awakened in their minds by the Spirit of God, that this circumſtance leſſened not at all their regard to the Apoſtle or to his meſſage. "They received him as an angel of God, even as Chriſt Jeſus ‖." They confeſſed the bleſſedneſs, which they felt on account of the Goſpel, and were ready to give even the moſt painful proofs of their affection to him. In all this we ſee, what the Goſpel is, what it does for men who truly underſtand and embrace it in an humbled heart, what was St. Paul's manner of preaching, and how different a thing Chriſtianity then appeared from the frigid ſpeculations which in modern times bear that name.

But

* Galat. iii. 1. † iv. 6. ‡ iii. 4. § iv. 8. ‖ iv. 14.

But ſoon after Paul had left them with the moſt pleaſing hopes of their ſpiritual growth, he was aſtoniſhed to hear of a change for the worſe, which took place among them. Some Jews, who were either their own countrymen, or who had lately arrived at Galatia from other parts of Aſia Minor where Paul had laboured, took pains to pervert them. They made no attempts, indeed, to unſettle their minds in the views of the unity of the Godhead, and the principal facts of Chriſtianity; nor did they endeavour to draw them back to the worſhip of idols. They neither formally denied the atonement of Chriſt, nor perſuaded the people to deſiſt from Chriſtian worſhip. Yet was it another goſpel, though it deſerved not the name of Goſpel *, to the love of which they ſeduced them. They aſſured them, that they could not be ſaved without circumciſion, and prevailed on them to Judaize ſo far, as to obſerve the rites of Moſes in various inſtances †. They took pains to eſtrange them from Paul, and to draw them over to themſelves, and to a worldly ſpirit of conformity, loving to appear fair in the eyes of men, and pretending to be zealous for good works, while their real view was to avoid the perſecution, which attended the Croſs of Chriſt ‡. To give the better effect to their inſinuations, they inſtilled into them diſreſpectful ideas of Paul as though he were far inferior to the other Apoſtles: and, as it ſeems, they repreſented the mother-church of Jeruſalem, with the college of Apoſtles there, as coinciding with themſelves in doctrine.

Thus the ſelf-righteous poiſon, which firſt iſſued from Jeruſalem, was brought into this diſtant province, where the ignorance and ſimplicity of the people, unacquainted with Jewiſh modes and habits, gave it the freeſt room to operate. Theſe falſe teachers

* Chap. i. 6, 7. † iv. 10. ‡ vi. 12.

teachers ſtill called themſelves Chriſtians, and the miſchief which they introduced, may be deemed at firſt ſight no great one. So, I doubt not, ſome faſhionable perverſions of Evangelical truth at this day, of a ſimilar kind, appear to many to be of no great conſequence. I am not, however, to diſguiſe that this Galatian deluſion appears ſtrongly to reſemble the perverſions to which I allude. I have repreſented things as they appear to me from the epiſtle. The great evil, lurking under all this art and zeal, was the adulteration of the faith of Jeſus, the ſole Author of our ſalvation. In no epiſtle does the Apoſtle ſpeak ſo ſharply, or expreſs himſelf ſo vehemently. His exhortation and rebuke came warm from a charitable heart, juſt after the reception of the diſagreeable tidings. He profeſſes himſelf aſtoniſhed at the defection of the Galatians from Chriſt; and execrates any man or even angel, who ſhould preach any other way of ſalvation. If ſuch a perſon ſtill call himſelf a Chriſtian, and hold the hiſtorical facts of the Goſpel, the caſe is not altered for the better; the deception only paſſing more current on that account *. He aſſerts, that if they mixed circumciſion, or any work of the law with Chriſt in the article of juſtification, Chriſt would be of no effect to them †. He muſt be their whole Saviour, or he would profit them nothing; law and grace in this caſe being quite oppoſite. He marks the mere worldly nature of the doctrine they were embracing ‡: it would make them bigotted Jews indeed, proud, ſelf-righteous, void of the love of God and man §, and no better in their ſpiritual ſtate than they were while idolaters ||. Thus they would loſe all the liberty of the Goſpel, and be mere ſlaves in religion,

* Chap. i. † Chap. v. ‡ Chap. vi. toward the end.
§ Chap. v. || iv. 9.

religion, like all unconverted perſons, who in reality are ſelf-righteous, and devoid of holy principle. He points out to them the peculiar nature of the Goſpel, as perfectly diſtinct from any thing that man in his depraved ſtate is apt to teach or ready to embrace. In the hiſtorical part of the epiſtle he vindicates his own Apoſtolical character, inculcates throughout, in all poſſible variety of language and with his uſual copiouſneſs both of clear argument and ſtrong diction, the all-important article of juſtification, and preſſes the neceſſity of continuing in it, in order to be benefited by it. Otherwiſe we make Chriſt the miniſter of ſin, or of condemnation: we build again what we have deſtroyed; and, as far as in us lies, make him to have died in vain. He appeals to their own experience of the happy fruits of the Goſpel, which they had felt internally, and repreſents himſelf as travailing in birth for them, till Chriſt be formed in them. He expreſſes himſelf dubious of their condition, and deſirous of viſiting them, that he might adapt his language to their perilous ſituation. He wiſhes that their evil adviſers were cut off, ſo miſchievous were they to ſouls; and aſſures them, that the Divine Vengeance would overtake thoſe that troubled them. He informs them, that the perſecution, which he himſelf endured, was on account of this very doctrine. This it was that ſtirred up the enmity of the human heart; and this doctrine being loſt, the Goſpel becomes a mere name, and Chriſtianity is loſt in the group of common religions.

It will be proper for us to bear in mind the Apoſtle's reaſonings on this ſubject, and to apply them to every period of Church-hiſtory; ſince it is evident, that the riſe or fall of this great Chriſtian article, muſt determine the vigour or decline of true religion in all ages. He neglects not however

to inculcate in his uſual manner the neceſſity of good works, as the juſt fruits and evidences of a real Chriſtian ſtate*; and he particularly encourages them to works of mercy, attended with a patient and cheerful proſpect into eternity, and animated with genuine charity †.

There is reaſon to hope, that the beſt effects were produced by the epiſtle. No very long time after, the Apoſtle again viſited theſe Churches, and went over the whole country, ſtrengthening "all the diſciples ‡." This is the ſubſtance of what I can collect from Scripture concerning the hiſtory of this Church, — except a ſingle hint in another epiſtle §, in which he recommends to the Corinthians to uſe the ſame plan for the relief of the poor ſaints, which he had ſuggeſted to the Galatians. From the influence which he hence appears to have had in Galatia, it is probable, that the Judaical perverſion was overcome.

* Chap. v. toward the end. † Chap. vi. ‡ Acts xviii. 23.
§ 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

PHILIPPI.

THE diſpenſation of the Goſpel is doubtleſs the greateſt bleſſing that can be vouchſafed to any country. But the times and the ſeaſons God hath reſerved to himſelf. Even in this ſenſe ſalvation is of grace; and Divine Providence alone orders and appoints, that the Goſpel ſhall be preached here or there, as he pleaſes. Paul and Silas, if left to themſelves, in their progreſs to the weſt, would have evangelized Pergamus or Aſia propria and Bithynia*, but were prevented by ſpecial intimations of the Holy Spirit. They came now to Troas,—ſo called from its being the place, or near the place, where old Troy had ſtood, by the ſea-coaſt,—uncertain whither they ſhould go next, and perhaps little apprehenſive, that God, now for the firſt time, was introducing his Goſpel into Europe. A nightly viſion, in which a Macedonian intreated Paul to come over into his country and help them, determined at once their deſtination. They ſailed from Troas to the Iſland of Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, a Macedonian ſea-port, whence, through the gulph of Strymon, they came to Philippi, the firſt city of that part of Macedonia, which they would meet with in their way from Neapolis. So I underſtand St. Luke's expreſſion πρωτη; for Theſſalonica was the capital of Macedonia. The city of Philippi, though originally Macedonian, and ſo named from Philip the father of Alexander, was then a Roman colony, inhabited by

* Acts xvi. 7.

by Roman citizens, and regulated by Roman laws and cuſtoms. The region, in which it ſtood, had been renowned for conſtituting the third of the four great monarchies under the arms of Alexander, and the place itſelf had been, ſomething more than half a century ago, the ſcene of a famous battle, between two Roman parties engaged in a civil war. Neither of THOSE ſeaſons would have been at all convenient for the Goſpel. The preſent was a ſcene of tranquillity and order under the Roman government: and Macedonia, though now only a Roman province, was going to be the ſubject of tranſactions infinitely more noble than thoſe, which adorn the hiſtory of its greateſt princes.

The appearances on their arrival did not promiſe any thing remarkable. They ſpent a few days at firſt with little proſpect of ſucceſs. They found a few Jews there, who uſed on the Sabbath-day to frequent an oratory out of the city by the river-ſide: and ſome women, religiouſly diſpoſed, reſorted thither. It was the conſtant method of the Apoſtles to join themſelves to Unitarians, wherever they could find them, as the firſt opening for the Goſpel of Chriſt. They did ſo on this occaſion, and ſpake to the women. One of them was Lydia, a perſon of ſome property. Her heart the Lord opened, that "ſhe attended to the things which were ſpoken by Paul." She was baptized with her family; and with affectionate importunity ſhe prevailed on the Apoſtle and his companions to make her houſe their home in Philippi. Here we have the beginnings of the Philippian Church; but the converſion was ſound and ſtable, and the progreſs of Lydia in the divine life ſeems of the ſame kind as that of Cornelius. Vexed at the proſpect, Satan employed a young woman poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of Python to bring the Goſpel into contempt, if poſſible. She con-

conſtantly followed the Chriſtian preachers, and bore them the moſt honourable teſtimony. Paul was grieved, as being fully ſenſible of the ill effect, which a ſuppoſed union between Chriſt and Python* muſt occaſion in the minds of men. He was at length enabled miraculouſly to eject the demon. The proprietors of the young woman, who had made a traffic of her oracular powers, finding that ſhe was diſpoſſeſſed of the demon, wreaked their vengeance on Paul and Silas, and by ſlanderous accuſations induced the magiſtrates to ſcourge them ſeverely, and to commit them to priſon. The jailer thruſt them into the inner priſon, and faſtened their feet in the ſtocks.

In this ſituation, diſtreſſing indeed, and in the eyes of many ridiculous, theſe two ſervants of God, at midnight, though oppreſſed with pain and hunger and every diſagreeable circumſtance, were yet enabled to pray and ſing praiſes to God. So powerful are the conſolations of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſo much did the love of Chriſt conſtrain them! And now the Lord cauſed a great earthquake, which opened all the doors of the priſon, and looſed every one's bonds. The jailer awaking, in his firſt trepidation, by a practice which I wiſh had been creditable among pagans only, was going to ruſh into eternity. Paul kindly aſſured him, that none of the priſoners had eſcaped. And now being ſtruck with horror at the thought of the world to come, to which he had been haſtening in all his guilt, and being divinely convinced of his danger, he came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and aſked what he muſt

* The very term leads me to apprehend, that the oracular work of the Pythian Apollo among the pagans had ſomething diabolical in it; and the ſtory before us demonſtrates the reality of ſuch deluſions, and that human fraud and ſagacity alone are not ſufficient to account for them.

muſt do to be ſaved. The anſwer was plain and direct. Why do any perſons who call themſelves Chriſtian miniſters ever give any other? "Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved and thy houſe." They then inſtructed him and his houſhold in the nature of the Goſpel, and opened to him the doctrine of forgiveneſs of ſins by the blood of Chriſt. His converſion appears evidently of the ſame kind, as that of the three thouſand at Jeruſalem. He was humbled for his ſins, and he received pardon by faith in Jeſus. His ready ſubmiſſion to baptiſm, his affectionate treatment of thoſe, who had juſt before been the objects of his ſeverity, and his joy in the Lord, demonſtrated, that he was turned from Satan to God.—His whole family ſhared with him in the ſame bleſſings.

In the morning the magiſtrates ſent an order for the diſmiſſion of the priſoners. But Paul thought it not inconſiſtent with Chriſtian meekneſs, to demand from them an apology for their illegal behaviour to Roman citizens; for ſuch it ſeems Silas was, as well as Paul. The magiſtrates, alarmed, came perſonally to make conceſſions, which were eaſily accepted. Being diſmiſſed from priſon, they entered into Lydia's houſe, comforted the diſciples, and left Philippi for the preſent.

Some years after, the Apoſtle again viſited the Philippians, and found them ſtill in a flouriſhing ſtate. He always took a peculiar pleaſure in this Church; and, in his epiſtle written from Rome, he thanks God for their ſincere fellowſhip in the Goſpel from the beginning. He expreſſes his expectation of liberty, and of being enabled to ſee them again, and exhorts them to bear patiently the perſecutions to which they were expoſed, as an evidence of the divine favour *.

Liberality was a ſhining virtue among theſe converts.

* Philip. i. 28, 29.

verts. They had ſent once and again to his relief at Theſſalonica *. And now they had ſent Epaphroditus to Rome, to miniſter to his wants. A dangerous illneſs had brought that diſciple to the borders of the grave. Upon his recovery he was afflicted to think of the diſtreſs, which the news of his ſickneſs muſt have brought on the minds of the Philippians. Paul was therefore the more anxious to ſend him back. The ſenſibility of that love, with which the Holy Ghoſt had influenced all concerned in this affair, is finely deſcribed in this part of the epiſtle †. The Apoſtle, toward the cloſe of it, even exults in the pleaſure which the charity of theſe diſciples gave him; and he aſſures them, that his God would "ſupply all their need according to his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus." He warns them however againſt the dangers of ſeduction. Judaiſing teachers deſired to pervert them. He reminds them, therefore ‡, of his own ſimple dependence on the Lord Jeſus, though he had fairer pretenſions than moſt men to ſelf-righteouſneſs; and with tears in his eyes declares, that, even then, many pretended Chriſtians walked like enemies of the croſs of Chriſt.

Such was the work of God at Philippi. A conſiderable number of perſons, once worſhippers of idols, devoted to the baſeſt luſts, and ſunk in the groſſeſt ignorance, were brought to the knowledge and love of the true God, and to the hope of ſalvation by his Son Jeſus. In this faith and hope they perſevered amidſt a world of perſecutions, ſteadily brought forth the fruits of charity, and lived in the joyful expectation of a bleſſed reſurrection.

* Philip. iv. 16. † Chap ii. toward the end. ‡ Chap. iii.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THESSALONICA.

OF Amphipolis and Apollonia, the next cities of Macedonia through which St. Paul paſſed, nothing particular is recorded. But at Theſſalonica another European Church was formed inferior in ſolid piety to none in the primitive times. This city had been rebuilt by Philip of Macedon, and had its name from his conqueſt of Theſſaly. Here Paul followed his uſual practice of preaching firſt to the Jews in their ſynagogue, and ſpent the firſt three Sabbaths in pointing out the evidences of Chriſtianity. The cuſtom of the Jews in allowing any of their countrymen to exhort in their ſynagogues, gave the Apoſtle an eaſy opportunity of preaching to this people, till their accuſtomed enmity and obſtinacy began to exert itſelf. Some of the Jews were however converted *, and a great multitude of religious Gentiles, who uſed to attend the ſynagogue, and not a few females of quality. So difficult is it for even Satan himſelf to eraſe all perception of the one true God from the minds of men, ſo powerful is the voice of natural conſcience, and ſo totally unreaſonable is the polytheiſm of the pagans, that notwithſtanding the extreme depravity of human nature, we find, wherever the Jews carried on the publick worſhip of the God of Iſrael, it was common for ſome Gentiles to join in their worſhip. Within the bounds of the Holy Land there were a number of this ſort. And I obſerve through the whole tenour of Joſephus's hiſtory, that

* Acts xvii.

that the Romans treated with reſpect what the Jews held ſacred; and whoever was diſtinguiſhed by any religious thoughtfulneſs from others, ſuch an one found nothing to ſuit him in Gentile rites, but preferred the worſhip of the Jews. The devout Greeks converted at Theſſalonica were of this claſs; and this is not the firſt inſtance we have ſeen of the LORD's preparing perſons, by an attention to a more imperfect light, for the Sun of Righteouſneſs. But HE is not confined to one method. The major part of the Theſſalonian converts were idolaters *, who now turned to the living and true God, in the faith and hope of Jeſus, who "delivered them from the wrath to come." Faith, hope, and charity evidenced this people to be God's elect: the word came to their hearts in much power and aſſurance; and, though it expoſed them to great affliction, this did not prevent their joy of the Holy Ghoſt.

The reſtleſs Jews were not aſhamed to join with the moſt profligate pagans in perſecuting the new converts; and decent hypocrites and open ſinners were, once more, ſeen united in oppoſing the Church of God. They aſſaulted the houſe of Jaſon, at whoſe houſe Paul and his companions were entertained. Precautions having been uſed to ſecrete them, Jaſon and ſome other Chriſtians were brought before the magiſtrates, and calumniated with the uſual charge of ſedition. The Roman governors, however, were content with exacting a ſecurity from Jaſon and his friends for the peace of the ſtate. But the Apoſtle knew too well the malice of the Jews to confide in any preſent appearances of their moderation; and therefore felt himſelf obliged abruptly to leave the infant Church. The firſt epiſtle, however, which he ſent to them, not long after, plainly proves that they were not without paſtors, whom he charges them to honour and obey †.

The

* 1 Theſſ. i. 9. † 1 Theſſ. v.

The growth of this people in godlineſs was ſoon renowned through the Chriſtian world. Their perſecution appears to have been grievous; and hence the comfort of God their Saviour, and the proſpect of the inviſible world, became more precious to them. The Apoſtle made two attempts to return to them, but was as often diſappointed by the malice of Satan *. Fearing, leſt the weight of affliction might cruſh their religion in its infancy, he ſent Timothy to them, to eſtabliſh and comfort them. From † him, on his return, he learnt the ſtrength of their faith and love and their affectionate remembrance of the Apoſtle, whoſe benevolent effuſions of joy and gratitude on the occaſion exceed all encomium. The influence of the Holy Spirit in enlightening, comforting, and invigorating this Church, ſeemed in a good meaſure to ſupply any want of paſtoral inſtruction, in which, from their circumſtances, they might probably be defective. They were taught of God to love one another, and they exerciſed this brotherly affection in the ſtrongeſt manner towards all around ‡.

Fornication indeed was a ſin ſo commonly practiſed among the Gentiles, without the leaſt ſuſpicion of its evil, that Paul thought proper to warn them againſt it expreſsly and diſtinctly §.

In his ſecond epiſtle he congratulates them on their great proficiency in faith and love: and, while he comforts them with the proſpect of the ſecond coming of Chriſt, he takes occaſion to correct a miſtake, into which they had fallen from what he had mentioned in his former epiſtle, of imagining that the laſt day was at hand. Men, who had ſuddenly paſſed from the groſſeſt ignorance into the full blaze of Goſpel-day, might eaſily make ſuch

* 1 Theſſ. ii. 18. † 1 Theſſ. iii. 9, 10. ‡ iv. 9, 10.
§ iv. 3—9.

ſuch a miſtake, eſpecially ſince their affections were now ſo ſtrongly captivated with heavenly objects, and ſince they found ſo little in a world of perſecution to cheer their minds. There appears only one fault in this people which he thought neceſſary to rebuke. He intimated ſomething * of it in the former epiſtle, in the latter he was more expreſs †. It was the want of induſtry in their callings, with which he charged ſome of them; for this was not a general evil. How they might fall into it, is eaſy to conceive. Perſons all alive for God and his Chriſt, and knowing little of the deceitfulneſs of the heart, and the crafts of Satan, might find it irkſome to attend to the concerns of this life. It was a fault indeed, and very dangerous, if perſiſted in; but as it was, in all probability, ſoon corrected, and in part occaſioned by the ſtrength of heavenly affections, one cannot be very ſevere in cenſuring them.

It may be worth while for thoſe, who feel themſelves much irritated againſt ſimilar evils attendant on the effuſion of the Holy Spirit in our days, to conſider whether they do not exerciſe more candour toward the Theſſalonians, than they do toward thoſe, who are actually walking in their ſteps; whether they are not apt to reſpect the former as real Chriſtians, and to ſcorn the latter as deluded enthuſiaſts!

This Church bears the ſtrongeſt ſignatures of godlineſs, the effect of no common effuſion of the Spirit. They adorned the Goſpel with faith, hope, and charity; yet ſhewed, by their faults and ignorance, the importance of diligent and much paſtoral inſtruction, in which their circumſtances ſuffered them not to abound; and which, under God, would have ſoon cured the former, and removed the latter. They were expoſed to ſuch blemiſhes, as are moſt apt

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 11, 12. † 2 Theſſ. iii. 11.

apt to attend great attainments in the divine life made with vaſt rapidity.

It appears, that St. Paul viſited this people a conſiderable time after, and gave them much exhortation; but we have no particular further account of them *.

* In the firſt epiſtle he "charges them by the Lord," that it be "read to all the holy brethren." As this ſeems to have been his firſt epiſtle, and indeed the neweſt part of the whole New Teſtament. the ſolemnity of the adjuration (ὁρκίζω) has a peculiar propriety, as Dr. Lardner obſerves. The Theſſalonians were no doubt diſpoſed to receive it as matter of apoſtolical inſpiration, and the importance of bringing every Chriſtian to be well acquainted with the word of God is fairly inferred.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

BEREA AND ATHENS.

PAUL was conducted from Theſſalonica to Berea, a city of Macedonia. Here alſo was a Jewiſh ſynagogue, and here the preaching of the Croſs was candidly received by Jews for the firſt time. A very ſingular character is given of the Jews of this place; —they poſſeſſed a liberality of mind, which diſpoſed them to liſten with attention, and to ſearch the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament with daily aſſiduity. The grace of God ſeems to have prepared theſe perſons for the Goſpel; and Paul had the pleaſure to find a number of the ſtamp of Cornelius, who were groping their way to happineſs, and were ready to hail the light as ſoon as it ſhould dawn upon them. Many Jews of Berea believed, and not a few Gentiles alſo of both ſexes: thoſe of the female ſex were perſons of quality. The rage of the Theſſalonian Jews ſoon, however, diſturbed this pleaſing ſcene, and ſtirred up a perſecution, which obliged the Chriſtians to uſe ſome art in ſaving the Apoſtle's life. His conductors at firſt took the road toward the ſea, which might lead the perſecutors to ſuppoſe he had quitted the continent. They then brought him ſafe to Athens *, once the firſt city of Greece in all views, and ſtill renowned for taſte and ſcience, the ſchool in which the greateſt Romans ſtudied philoſophy. Here, while he waited for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he beheld the monuments of the city with other eyes than thoſe of a ſcholar and a gentleman. No place in the world

* Acts xvii.

world could more have entertained a curious and philoſophical ſpirit than this. Temples, altars, ſtatues, hiſtorical memorials, living philoſophers of various ſects, books of thoſe, who were deceaſed, a conſluence of polite and humanized perſons of various countries, enjoying the luxury of learned leiſure, — theſe things muſt at once have obtruded themſelves on his notice: and no man in any age, by ſtrength of underſtanding, warmth of temper, and juſtneſs of taſte, ſeems to have been more capable of entering into the ſpirit of ſuch ſcenes than Saul of Tarſus. But Divine Grace had given his faculties a very different direction; and the Chriſtian in him predominated extremely above the philoſopher and the critic. He ſaw here, that even the exceſs of learning brought men no nearer to God. No place on earth was more given to idolatry. He could not therefore find pleaſure in the claſſical luxuries preſented before him: He ſaw his Maker diſgraced, and ſouls periſhing in ſin. Pity and indignation ſwallowed up all other emotions: and miniſters of Chriſt, by their own ſenſations in ſimilar ſcenes, may try how far they are poſſeſſed of the mind of Paul, which, in this caſe, certainly was the mind of Chriſt. If affections be lively, ſome exertions will follow. He laid open the reaſons of Chriſtianity to Jews in their ſynagogue, to Gentile worſhippers, who attended the ſynagogue, and, daily, to any perſons whom he met with in the forum. There were two ſects very oppoſite to one another among the pagan philoſophers, namely, the Epicureans and the Stoics. The former placed the chief good in pleaſure, the latter in, what they called, virtue, correſpondent to the two chief ſects among the Jews, the Sadducees and the Phariſees, and indeed to the two ſorts among mankind in all ages, who yet are in a ſtate of nature, namely, men

of

of a licentious and diſſipated turn of mind on the one hand, and on the other ſelf-righteous perſons who ſubſtitute their own reaſon and virtue in the room of divine grace and divine influence. As theſe will in any age unite againſt the real friends of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo it was here: The Apoſtle appeared a mere babbler in their eyes. Jeſus and the reſurrection, which he preached, were ideas, from which their minds were ſo abhorrent, that they took them for a new god and goddeſs.

It belonged to the court of Areopagus to take cognizance of things of this nature. This court had unjuſtly condemned the famous Socrates, as if he had depreciated the eſtabliſhed religion, though he had given as ſtrong proofs of his polytheiſtic attachments, as he had of philoſophical pride. It ought not however to be denied, that in a lower ſenſe he ſuffered for righteouſneſs' ſake. His honeſt rebukes of vice and improbity expoſed him to death;—ſo unſafe is even the leaſt approximation to goodneſs in a world like this. That St. Paul eſcaped condemnation here, ſeems owing to peculiar circumſtances. The court under the tolerating maxims of its Roman ſuperiors, ſeems now to have had only the privilege of examining tenets as a ſynod, without the penal power of magiſtracy *.

It would carry me too far to dwell on the excellent apology of Paul delivered before this court. He reproved their idolatry in language and by arguments perfectly claſſical; and he announced ſo much of the Goſpel, as was adapted to the very ignorant ſtate of his audience. Whoever duly examines this little maſter-piece of eloquence, may ſee that he labours

* In this however I am not very poſitive: A greater degree of ſceptical indifference might, in the progreſs of refinement, have prevailed at Athens in the days of St. Paul, and the court might itſelf be as little diſpoſed to perſecute, as the Roman powers.

labours to beget in them the ſpirit of conviction, and to prepare them for Goſpel-mercy, juſt as Peter did in his firſt ſermon at Jeruſalem. The means uſed by the two Apoſtles are as different, as the circumſtances of a Jewiſh and Athenian audience were: The end aimed at by both was the ſame.

There is reaſon to apprehend, that God never ſuffers the plain and faithful denunciation of his Goſpel to be altogether fruitleſs. A few perſons believed in reality and with ſtedfaſtneſs, among whom was Dionyſius a member of the court, and a woman named Damaris. Theſe Paul left to the care of that gracious God who had opened their eyes, and departed from a city as yet too haughty, too ſcornful, and too indifferent concerning things of infinite moment, to receive the Goſpel. A Church could hardly be ſaid to be formed here, though a few individuals were converted. The little ſucceſs at Athens evinces that a ſpirit of literary trifling in religion, where all is theory, and the conſcience is unconcerned, hardens the heart effectually. What a contraſt between the effects of the ſame Goſpel diſpenſed to the illiterate Macedonians, and the philoſophical Athenians! Yet there want not many profeſſing Chriſtians, who, while they ſtigmatize men of the former ſort with the name of barbarians, beſtow on the latter the appellation of enlightened perſons.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

CORINTH.

THIS was at that time the metropolis of Greece. Its ſituation in an iſthmus rendered it remarkably convenient for trade. It was the reſidence of the Roman governor of Achaia, the name then given to all Greece: and it was, at once, full of opulence, learning, luxury, and ſenſuality. Hither the Apoſtle came from Athens, and laboured both among the Jews and the Gentiles. Here Providence gave him the acquaintance and friendſhip of Aquila and his wife Priſcilla, two Jewiſh Chriſtians lately expelled from Italy with other Jews, by an edict of the emperor Claudius. With them he wrought as a tent-maker, being of the ſame occupation: For every Jew, whether rich or poor, was obliged to follow ſome trade. After the arrival of Silas and Timothy, the Apoſtle with much vehemence preached to his countrymen; but oppoſition and abuſe were the only returns he met with. The modern notions of charity will ſcarcely be reconciled to the zealous indignation which he ſhewed on this occaſion. He ſhook his garment, and told them, that he was clear of their deſtruction; and that he would leave them, and apply himſelf to the Gentiles in this city. With this denunciation he left the ſynagogue, and entered into the houſe of one Juſtus, a devout perſon, well-affected to the Goſpel. Criſpus alſo, the ruler of the ſynagogue, with his whole family, received the truth. But we hear of no more Jewiſh converts at this place. However many Corinthians were converted. And

a gracious viſion of the Lord Jeſus * who ſaid to Paul in the night, "I have much people in this city," encouraged him to continue here a year and a half.—The rage of the Jews would doubtleſs be raiſed to the higheſt pitch; but, as uſual, the moderate ſpirit of the Roman government prevented its ſanguinary exertions. Gallio the proconſul, brother of the famous Seneca, was perfectly indifferent concerning the progreſs of Chriſtianity, and refuſed to pay the leaſt attention to their complaints againſt Paul, who now found himſelf ſo effectually preſerved from the fury of his countrymen, that he remained in Corinth a conſiderable time longer than the abovementioned year and a half. After his departure Apollos, a zealous and eloquent Alexandrian Jew, came to this city, and was made a very powerful inſtrument of building up this Church, and of ſilencing the oppoſition of the Jews. The modeſty of this man was as conſpicuous as his ſpirit. Till he was inſtructed more perfectly by Aquila and Priſcilla, he knew no more of Chriſtianity, than what was contained in the ſyſtem of John the Baptiſt. That ſo able a man could ſubmit to profit by others, was a proof of a humble frame.

It appears, that St. Paul, ſo far as circumſtances admitted, kept up a conſtant correſpondence with the Churches. The care of them, as he ſays, "came upon him daily." The Corinthians wrote to him to aſk his advice on ſome caſes of conſcience; and he underſtood, that a variety of evils and abuſes had crept in among them. On theſe accounts he wrote the two epiſtles to the Corinthians. We are aſtoniſhed to find in reviewing them, how faulty many perſons of this Church were; and the ſcene, which they exhibit, more reſembles modern than primitive times in a variety of circumſtances. It falls not within the deſign of this hiſtory to enlarge.

Former

* Acts xviii.

Former writers have, with more than ſufficient accuracy, detailed the evils; let one at leaſt be allowed briefly to record the good things of the Church of Chriſt. In regard to the people of Corinth, their exemption from perſecution under Gallio, and their ſtate of eaſe and proſperity, ſo uncommon with other Churches, in a great meaſure account for the little ſpirituality which they manifeſted. Perhaps no Church was more numerous, and none leſs holy in the apoſtolic age. And it may teach us not to repine at the want of the MIRACULOUS operations of the Holy Spirit, when we conſider that theſe Corinthians abounded in them. But they were proud of gifts, contentious, ſelf-conceited, and warm partizans of Paul, Apollos, or Peter; and by the indulgence of this ſpirit, ſhewed how little they had learned of true wiſdom, which gives the Apoſtle occaſion* to recommend the wiſdom that is from above, to point out the nature and properties of ſpiritual underſtanding, and to pour a juſt contempt on that, which is merely natural.

With the pride of falſe wiſdom they joined a very blamable neglect in practice. One of their Church lived in inceſt, nor was the offender excommunicated†. St. Paul rebukes them alſo for their litigiouſneſs and laſciviouſneſs‡. In anſwer to their queries, he recommends celibacy as preferable to matrimony, where a man can practiſe it, and that I think from general reaſons §, as more favourable to holineſs, without however depreciating matrimony, or giving the leaſt countenance to the flood of monaſtic abuſes, which afterwards prevailed in Chriſtendom. But mankind are ever prone to extremes: and the extreme which is oppoſite to ſuperſtition ſo much prevails at preſent, that I ſhould not wonder, if ſome perſons

* 1 Cor. four firſt Chapters. † Chap. v. ‡ Chap. vi.
§ Chap. vii.

perſons ſhould ſtartle at what I have mentioned as the ſentiments of St. Paul, though it be impoſſible for any unprejudiced perſon to underſtand him otherwiſe.

So little were the Corinthians expoſed to perſecution, that they were invited by their idolatrous neighbours to partake of their idol feaſts; and there were thoſe who complied *. There were falſe apoſtles among them, who, by pretending to inſtruct them gratis, endeavoured to depreciate Paul as a mercenary perſon †. Hence, while he rebukes the faults or defects of this people, he obſerves that HE laboured among them freely, which the falſe apoſtles pretended to do. He proceeds to correct an abuſe which obtained in their aſſemblies, in the article of decency of dreſs; and another much worſe,—the profanation of the Lord's Supper ‡. He inſiſts alſo on the correction of their abuſe of ſpiritual gifts, particularly thoſe of languages §. It appears that gifts were more prized by them, in ſome reſpects, than grace itſelf; and that love, which he beautifully deſcribes, was at a low ebb among them. He occaſionally mentions however a very common effect attendant on the preaching of the Goſpel even at Corinth: If an ignorant idolater came into their aſſemblies, he was ſo penetrated with the diſplay of the truth as it is in Jeſus, that he could not but diſcover the very ſecrets of his ſoul: he would proſtrate himſelf in the worſhip of God, and report that God was in them of a truth ‖. And, if where the

* 1 Cor. viii. 10. † 1 Cor. ix. compared with 2 Cor. xi. 13—20. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. § Chap. xii. xiii. xiv.

‖ This is a proof of the Divine Influence attendant on Chriſtianity. General proofs of its authenticity may be drawn alſo from the ſubject of miraculous gifts. The Apoſtle's manner of deſcribing theſe things proves their reality and their frequency. For no man could have convinced theſe Corinthians, that they were in poſſeſſion of thoſe gifts, if they themſelves had not been conſcious of them.

the Goſpel was ſo little honoured by the lives of its profeſſors as at Corinth, ſuch power attended the diſpenſation of it, how much more of the ſame kind, may we ſuppoſe, happened at Philippi and at Theſſalonica? For we have not yet mentioned all the evils of this outwardly flouriſhing, but inwardly diſtempered Church. There were ſome, who even denied the reſurrection of the body, which gives occaſion to the Apoſtle to illuſtrate that important article *.

Though he had promiſed to re-viſit them ſoon, yet, in the next epiſtle, he aſſigns a reaſon why he delayed longer than he had intended. Their Chriſtian ſtate was very imperfect; and he wiſhed to be enabled, by their reformation, to come among them with more pleaſure. In truth, he wrote the firſt epiſtle in much anguiſh and affliction †. His ſoul was deeply affected for this people; and while great progreſs in profeſſion ſeemed ſo inconſiſtent with their experience and their practice, he felt the ſincereſt grief. He was relieved at length by the coming of Titus ‡. From his account it appeared, that the admonitions were by no means fruitleſs. The caſe of the inceſtuous perſon at length was attended to by them as it ought: they proceeded even with more ſeverity than the Apoſtle deſired; for, though the man gave the ſtrongeſt proof of repentance, they refuſed to re-admit him into their Church, till St. Paul ſignified his expreſs deſire that they would do ſo.

There can be no doubt but that many perſons belonging to this Church were recovered to a ſtate of affection and practice worthy of Chriſtianity. In particular the Apoſtle commends their liberality toward the diſtreſſed Chriſtians §. But there was

* Chap. xv. † 2 Cor. ii. 4. ‡ 2 Cor. vii. § 2 Cor. ix.

was an obſtinate party ſtill attached to the falſe apoſtles, whoſe conduct extorted from him a zealous and honeſt commendation of himſelf, his endowments, and his office, which yet he manages with great addreſs and delicacy, while he bewails the ſcandalous practices ſtill exiſting among them *.

On his arrival at Corinth after theſe epiſtles, he doubtleſs executed what he had threatened, namely, ſome wholeſome ſeverities on offenders, unleſs their ſpeedy and ſincere repentance prevented the neceſſity of ſuch a ſtep. He ſpent three months † in his ſecond viſit. But we have no more particular account in Scripture of this Church.

* Chap. xi. xii. † Acts xx.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

ROME.

IT may ſeem to have been purpoſely appointed by infinite wiſdom, that our firſt accounts of the Roman Church ſhould be very imperfect, in order to confute the proud pretenſions to univerſal dominion, which its biſhops have with unbluſhing arrogance ſupported for ſo many ages. If a line or two in the Goſpels concerning the keys of St. Peter have been made the foundation of ſuch lofty pretenſions in his ſuppoſed ſucceſſors to the primacy, how would they have gloried, if his labours at Rome had been ſo diſtinctly celebrated, as thoſe of St. Paul in ſeveral Churches? What bounds would have been ſet to the pride of eccleſiaſtical Rome, could ſhe have boaſted of herſelf as the mother-church, like Jeruſalem, or even exhibited ſuch trophies of Scriptural fame, as Philippi, Theſſalonica, Corinth, or Epheſus? The ſilence of Scripture is the more remarkable, becauſe the Church itſelf was in an early period by no means inſignificant, either for the number or the piety of its converts. Their faith was ſpoken of through the whole world*. The Apoſtle thus commends them; nor does he in his epiſtle to them intimate any thing peculiarly faulty in their principles or conduct. The epiſtle to the Romans itſelf, while the world endures, will be the food of Chriſtian minds, and the richeſt ſyſtem of doctrine to ſcriptural theologians. By the diſtinct directions which

* Rom. i.

which he gives for the maintenance of charity between Jews and Gentiles, it appears that there muſt have been a conſiderable number of the former among them. If one might indulge a conjecture, I ſhould ſuppoſe that Aquila and Priſcilla, who had laboured with St. Paul at Corinth both in a ſpiritual and temporal ſenſe, and had been expelled from Italy by the emperor Claudius, and whom he here ſalutes as at Rome, were firſt concerned in the plantation of this Church, which was numerous, before any Apoſtle had been there. Andronicus and Junia are ſaluted alſo in the epiſtle: they were men of character among the Apoſtles, whoſe converſion were of an earlier date than St. Paul's: they were alſo his kinſmen, and had ſuffered in conjunction with him for the faith. He ſalutes alſo a number of others, though they might not all be reſidents of Rome. The work of divine Grace in diſtinguiſhing perſons of various families and connections is ever obſervable. There were ſaints at Rome of the two families of Ariſtobulus and Narciſſus. The former was of the royal blood of the Maccabees, and had been carried priſoner to Rome by Pompey. He himſelf had ſuffered a variety of hardſhips incident to a life of turbulent ambition like his; yet ſome of his family, of no note in civil hiſtory, are marked as the diſciples of Chriſt, and heirs of the true riches. Narciſſus is diſtinguiſhed in Roman hiſtory as the ambitious prime miniſter of Claudius; yet ſome of his houſhold were in the Lord.

Paul had long wiſhed and even projected a viſit to this Church. He did not expect that his journey thither at laſt was to be at Cæſar's expenſe. Confident however he was, that when he did come to them, it ſhould be "in the fulneſs of the bleſſing

bleſſing of the Goſpel of Chriſt." And he intreats the prayers of the Romans, that he may be delivered from the infidel Jews, and be acceptable in his miniſtry to his believing countrymen at Jeruſalem, whither he was then haſtening, that "he might come to them with joy by the will of God," and be with them refreſhed. Thus did Chriſtians in thoſe days intreat the prayers of their brethren through the world, and ſympathize with one another. And the prayers were anſwered: Paul was ſaved from Jewiſh malice: was acceptable to the Jewiſh converts, "who had compaſſion on him in his bonds;" and was conducted ſafe to Rome. At Appii Forum and the three taverns he was met by the Roman Chriſtians: he thanked God and took courage*, refreſhed, as he had been confident he ſhould be, whenever he might arrive among them. None but thoſe, who know what is meant by the communion of ſaints, can conceive the pleaſure which he felt on the occaſion. After a charitable but fruitleſs attempt to do good to the principal Jews at Rome, he employed the two years of his impriſonment in receiving all who came to him, preaching with all confidence, and without moleſtation. On account of his impriſonment and examination at Rome, the nature of the Goſpel began to be enquired into† in Nero's court, and the concluſion of the epiſtle to the Philippians makes it evident, that ſome of the imperial houſhold became Chriſtians indeed. And as the court was by no means diſpoſed to treat him with rigour, but rather to favour him with indulgences as a Roman citizen, hence many preachers in Rome and the neighbourhood exerted themſelves with more courage than formerly they dared to do. Yet certain perſons even then could preach Chriſt with malevolent

* Acts xxviii. 15. † Philippians i.

lent views of depreciating the Apoſtles: others did it with ſincere charity. But as real benefit accrued to the ſouls of men from the labours of the former as well as of the latter, the heart of Paul, with a charity, the wonderful effect of heavenly teaching, could rejoice in both.

Some writers ſeem to have gone too far, in denying that Peter ever was at Rome. But the cauſe of Proteſtantiſm needs not the ſupport of an unreaſonable ſcepticiſm. Undoubtedly the account of Peter's martyrdom there, with that of Paul, reſts on a foundation ſufficiently ſtrong, namely, the concurrent voice of antiquity. His firſt epiſtle, by an expreſſion at the cloſe of it*, appears to have been dated thence; for the Church at Babylon, according to the ſtyle of Chriſtians at that time, could be no other than the Church at Rome. —Of the literal Babylon we find nothing in the writers of thoſe days.

* 1 Pet. v. 13.

CHAP. XIII.

COLOSSE.

THIS city of Phrygia was in the neighbourhood of Laodicea and Hierapolis, and all three ſeem to have been converted by the miniſtry of Epaphras the Coloſſian, a companion and fellow-labourer of Paul, who attended him at Rome during his impriſonment, and informed him of the ſincerity and fruitfulneſs of their Chriſtian profeſſion. For though he ſpeaks to the Coloſſians only, yet the religious ſtate of the two neighbouring cities may be conceived to be much the ſame. The example of Epaphras deſerves to be pointed out to the imitation of all miniſters. He always laboured fervently for them in prayers, "that they might ſtand perfect and complete in all the will of God *." And this was indeed one of the beſt methods of evincing the ſincerity of his zeal, which Paul owns to have been great for theſe Churches.

The Apoſtle himſelf, in the fulneſs and fervency of his charity, wiſhes, that the Coloſſians knew how ſtrong the conflict of his ſoul was for them, that they might feel the comfort, underſtand the myſtery, and enjoy the riches of the Goſpel †. They had never ſeen his face in the fleſh; but he felt for them as Chriſtian brethren, and honoured them as thoſe, in whom the word brought forth fruit, and who had a lively hope in Chriſt beyond the grave. But there muſt have been ſome particular dangers incident

* Col. iv. 12. † Chap. ii. 1, 2.

incident to their ſituation, to give propriety to the cautions in his epiſtle againſt philoſophy and vain deceit, againſt Judaical dependencies and rites, and againſt an illegitimate humility and ſelf-righteous auſterities. Such things, he obſerves, carry indeed the appearance of wiſdom and goodneſs*, but lead only to pride and an extravagant ſelf-eſtimation. And the tendency of them is, to draw the mind from that ſimplicity of dependence on Chriſt, which is the true reſt of the ſoul, and the right frame of a Chriſtian.

In truth, the Jew by his ceremonies, and the Gentile by his philoſophy, equally laboured to overturn the Goſpel of Chriſt. And their ſelf-righteous efforts are then only effectually oppoſed, when Chriſtians know their "completeneſs in Chriſt, and walk in him." After he has delivered a number of beautiful precepts, cloſely interwoven with Chriſtian doctrine, he directs them to read his epiſtle in their aſſembly, and then to ſend it to be read by the Laodiceans; and alſo to receive an epiſtle from Laodicea to be read in their own Church, which, moſt probably, was the epiſtle to the Epheſians; none of theſe places being at a great diſtance from one another†. And he gives a plain, but very ſerious, charge to Archippus their preſent paſtor. We ſee hence with what care theſe precious Apoſtolical remains were preſerved among primitive Chriſtians; and we may conceive, how, in the infancy of ſpiritual conſolation, they fed on thoſe lively oracles, which we now ſo indolently poſſeſs.

I ſee nothing more to be collected from the Scriptures concerning the ſtate of this Church, except the inſtructive anecdote in the epiſtle to Philemon. This man, a Coloſſian chriſtian, had a ſlave, named, Oneſimus,

* Col. ii. ult. † Chap. iv. 16, 17.

Oneſimus, who deſerted from his maſter, probably not without ſome depredations of his property, and wandered to Rome. That, like all great cities, was the ſink, which received the confluence of various vices and crimes. There the wonderful Grace of God ſeized his heart. Providence brought him to hear Paul preach, which we have ſeen that Apoſtle continued to do for two years in his impriſonment. Though former means of inſtruction under his Chriſtian maſter had failed, now, at length, his eyes were opened, and he became a Chriſtian indeed. Paul would have found him an uſeful aſſiſtant at Rome, but thought it moſt proper to ſend him back to his maſter at Coloſſe; and this he did with a ſhort letter, which may juſtly be conſidered as a maſter-piece of Chriſtian politeneſs, addreſs and ſincerity. In his Coloſſian epiſtle he mentions him alſo as a faithful and beloved brother.—What important changes Divine Grace can effect in the hearts of men, even of ſlaves whom proud philoſophers deſpiſed, appears very evident from this inſtance!

CHAP. XIV.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

THERE are ſome countries, to which we underſtand that the Goſpel was carried during the firſt effuſion of the Holy Spirit, which are only incidentally mentioned without any detail of facts.

Extenſive as we have ſeen, from St. Luke's narrative, the labours of the Apoſtle Paul were, it is evident from the epiſtles, that he is far from relating the whole of them. We cannot learn, for inſtance, from the Acts, when he viſited Crete. Yet the ſhort epiſtle to Titus, whom he left there with epiſcopal authority to ordain miniſters in every city, and to regulate the churches, ſhews that that iſland of a hundred cities had been conſiderably evangelized; and that many perſons, among a people proverbially deceitful, ferocious, and intemperate, had received the wholeſome yoke of Chriſt.

And though I cannot but think, that the ſtrangers ſcattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, and Bithynia, to whom St. Peter addreſſes his two epiſtles, muſt mean the Jews of thoſe countries, yet their converſion would doubtleſs be attended with that of many Gentiles. Of three of theſe we know nothing particularly: the work of God in Galatia has been reviewed; and Aſia propria alone, of all the evangelized regions mentioned in ſcripture-hiſtory, ſo far as I can diſcover, remains now to be conſidered.

It was on his firſt departure from Corinth, that Paul firſt viſited Epheſus*, which name ſtands at the head of the ſeven Churches of Aſia, to whom St. John dedicates the book of the Revelation. The impreſſion made on his hearers during this viſit, muſt have been remarkably great, as it was but a ſhort one, and as they preſſed his longer continuance among them. He left with them however for their comfort and inſtruction Aquila and Priſcilla, whoſe labours were afterwards aſſiſted by Apollos.

Paul himſelf returning to Epheſus, baptized in the name of Jeſus about twelve diſciples, who had hitherto received only John's baptiſm†. From this circumſtance we learn, that from the firſt preaching of the Baptiſt nothing had been done in vain. The imperfect elements of that harbinger of Chriſt had paved the way for clearer diſcoveries, and a variety of preparatory works had tended to ripen the Church of God into the fulneſs of light and holineſs.

Paul preached three months in the Jewiſh ſynagogue at Epheſus, till the uſual perverſeneſs of the Jews induced him to deſiſt, and to form the converts into a diſtinct Church. One Tyrannus lent his ſchool for the ſervice of Chriſtianity; and in that convenient place, for the ſpace of two years, the Apoſtle daily miniſtered, inſtructed and diſputed. And thus the whole region of Aſia propria had at different times an opportunity of hearing the Goſpel.

In no place does the word of God ſeem ſo much to have triumphed as at Epheſus. No leſs numerous than thoſe of Corinth, the believers were much more ſpiritual. The work of converſion was deep, vigorous, and ſoul-transforming to a great degree. Many perſons, ſtruck with the horror of their former crimes,

* Acts xviii. 19. † Acts xix.

crimes, made an open confeſſion; and many, who had dealt in the abominations of ſorcery, now ſhewed their ſincere deteſtation of them by burning their books before all men, the price of which amounted to a large ſum. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."—Thus triumphs the ſacred hiſtorian.—Satan muſt have trembled for his kingdom: the emptineſs of all the ſyſtems of philoſophy appeared no leſs palpable, than the flagitiouſneſs of vice, and the enormities of idolatry: The ſpiritual power of Jeſus was never ſeen in a ſtronger light ſince the day of Pentecoſt; and the venal prieſthood of Diana the celebrated goddeſs of Epheſus, apprehended the total ruin of their hierarchy.

No place on earth was more devoted to idolatry. A number of ingenious artiſts were enriched by making ſilver ſhrines for Diana. They felt a ſenſible diminution of their commerce, and found themſelves bound by intereſt to ſupport the credit of the goddeſs. Much people through almoſt all Aſia had been induced to believe, that manufactured gods were mere nothings; and it ſeemed high time to make ſome ſtrong efforts in favour of the declining ſuperſtition. They ſoon prevailed ſo far as to fill the city with tumult; and they hurried two of Paul's companions with them into the theatre, where the whole mob aſſembled. The daring ſpirit of Paul would have led him into the ſame place. His Chriſtian friends interpoſed, and even ſome of the Aſiarchs,—perſons who preſided over the games,—who had a perſonal eſteem for the man, kindly diſſuaded him. His zeal ſeems not void of raſhneſs, but it was the raſhneſs of a hero vexed to the ſoul to think that Gaius and Ariſtarchus, his two friends, were likely to ſuffer in his abſence. Now I apprehend was that ſeaſon of extreme

extreme diſtreſs, which he felt in Aſia, and which he deſcribes ſo pathetically * in his Epiſtle to the Corinthians. Human reſources failed; and God alone, he learnt, could ſupport him. The prudent and eloquent harangue of a magiſtrate, called the town-clerk, was the providential inſtrument of his deliverance. He calmed the ſpirits of the Epheſians, and ſilenced the uproar; after which Paul affectionately embraced the diſciples, and left Epheſus. Three years he had laboured with great ſucceſs; and he had the precaution to leave paſtors to ſuperintend that and the neighbouring Churches. But he foreſaw with grief, as he afterwards told theſe paſtors in a very pathetic addreſs, when he had ſent for them to Miletus †, that their preſent purity would not continue unſtained. Wolves would enter among them to devour the flock; and, among themſelves heretical perverſeneſs would find countenance, and produce pernicious ſeparations. He did all, however, which man could do: he warned them of the danger; and exhorted them to the perſevering diſcharge of their duty.

The parting between the Apoſtles and theſe miniſters cannot be read without emotion. The elegant and affecting narrative of St. Luke is before the reader, and ought not to be abridged. The corruption of this excellent Church ſeems not, however, to have taken place, when he wrote to them his epiſtle. It is full of inſtruction; and, next to that to the Romans, may be looked on as a moſt admirable ſyſtem of divinity. It has this remarkable recommendation, that it will ſerve for any Church and for any age. Not a veſtige appears in it of any thing peculiarly miraculous, or excluſively primitive. The controverſies of the Chriſtian world concerning doctrine would ſoon be

* 2 Cor. i. 8, 9, 10. † Acts xx.

be decided, if men would ſubmit to be taught by the ſimple, literal, and grammatical meaning of this ſhort treatiſe. Every thing of doctrine and of duty is in it; and what the Goſpel really is, may thence be collected with the greateſt certainty.

It appears that Timothy was the chief paſtor at Epheſus in Paul's abſence *. The Apoſtle's firſt epiſtle to him throws ſome light on the ſtate of this Church during his adminiſtration. There were ſome perſons of a judaical and legal turn of mind, who endeavoured, by contentious queſtions, to pervert the ſimplicity of evangelical faith, hope, and love. There were others in the oppoſite extreme: Two are particularly characterized, Hymenæus and Alexander, who abuſed the profeſſion of the faith to ſuch open licentiouſneſs, as to render their ejection from the Church a neceſſary meaſure. So early were the Churches of Chriſt infected with the ſame evils, which, at this day, fail not to attend the propagation of Divine truth! From the directions which he gives to Timothy concerning the regulation of public worſhip, and the character and conduct of church-officers, it appears, indeed, that eccleſiaſtical polity had taken a firm root in this Church. But modern partizans and bigots will ſtill ſearch the ſcriptures in vain to find their own exact model, in matters, which the Word of God hath left indifferent, or at leaſt to be decided only by various circumſtances of prudential expediency: Churches will, doubtleſs, be much better employed, in eſtabliſhing and in obſerving uſeful practical rules, which are compatible with very different forms of government. I ſhould ſuſpect, that the ſuperſtitious and ſelf-righteous ſpirit, which, under a thouſand auſterities, afterwards ſupported itſelf in the eaſtern Churches, and proved one of the moſt powerful

* 1 Tim. i.

powerful engines of popery, had even then begun to ſhew itſelf in Epheſus and had given occaſion to the Apoſtolical cautions, as well as to the prophetical declaration of the vaſt increaſe of thoſe evils in after-times *. It was the charitable practice of the Church of Epheſus to maintain Chriſtian widows at the public expenſe. But I fear this liberality had been abuſed. Young widows, who had been living a life of eaſe, had thrown themſelves as a burden on their religious brethren; and however high they might appear in Chriſtian profeſſion, ſome of them exchanged the love of Chriſt for the love of the world, and the indulgence of ſenſuality †. As an idle life is a great ſource of theſe evils, the Apoſtle recommends that theſe ſhould be encouraged to enter again into the matrimonial ſtate, which would furniſh laudable domeſtic employments, rather than that they ſhould be maintained by the Church in a ſtate of indolence. The widows, who ſhould be ſo maintained by the public ſtock, he recommends to be thoſe, who were far advanced in life, of eminent laborious piety, and diſtinguiſhed for their works of charity.

On the whole, we may diſcover among theſe excellent people ſome appearances of the very worſt of evils; which, as yet, made feeble efforts, were kept down by the ſuperior light and grace that prevailed, and which ſeemed in indignant ſilence to be expecting future opportunities of diffuſing themſelves.

We know nothing more of this Church during the remainder of St. Paul's life, nor after his death, till toward the cloſe of the firſt century. St. John, the only ſurvivor of the Apoſtles, long continued his fatherly care of the Churches of Aſia propria. During his exile at Patmos he was favoured with an

* 1 Tim. iv. † v. 15.

an aſtoniſhing and magnificent viſion of the Lord Jeſus *, from whom he received ſeveral diſtinct charges, addreſſed to the ſeven Churches of Aſia, deſcriptive of their ſpiritual ſtate at that time, and containing ſuitable directions to each of them. The paſtors of the Churches are called angels; and, what has been obſervable in all ages was then the caſe, — the character of the paſtors was much the ſame with that of the people. We have here then, from the higheſt authority, ſome account of the ſtate of theſe Churches at the cloſe of the firſt century. — It is ſhort, but important. — Let us endeavour to compriſe it into as clear a view as poſſible.

The Epheſians were ſtill alive in the faith †. Attempts had been made to pervert them, but in vain. However ſubtil the poiſon of hereſy be, here it could find no admiſſion. Nor could the abominations of the Nicolaitanes, who appear to have been a ſect extremely corrupt in morals, make any progreſs among them. They patiently bore the croſs ever attendant on the real faith of Jeſus, but could endure nothing that tended to adulterate it. The taſte and ſpirit of the Goſpel continued with them: They laboured in good works without fainting or wearineſs; and their ſpiritual diſcernment was not to be impoſed on by any pretences. Yet they had declined from the intenſeneſs of that love, which they had at firſt exhibited: Their hearts panted not after Chriſt with that ſteady ardour which formerly had animated this people; and, with all the marks of ſound health remaining, their vigour had much abated.

How exactly does this account agree with the common caſe of the beſt Chriſtian churches. Becauſe it is a common caſe, and far from being the worſt caſe, Chriſtians are apt to be content under ſuch

* Rev. i. † Rev. ii.

ſuch a decline, and to impute it to neceſſity, or to the loſs of ſudden fervours of no great value, and to plume themſelves on the ſolidity of an improved judgment. But true zeal and true charity ſhould be ſhewn habitually, and not only now and then when occaſional inroads of the enemy may happen to call for particular exertions. Theſe affections ought to GROW as the underſtanding is improved. The ſpirit of prayer, of love to Chriſt, of active ſervices for his name, was now abated at Epheſus, and a cool prudence was too much magnified at the expenſe of charity. The eternal ſalvation of real Chriſtians there was ſafe; but real Chriſtians ſhould have more in view than their own ſalvation,—namely, the propagation of godlineſs to poſterity. Theſe cautious Chriſtians did not conſider that their decline paved the way for farther and more melancholy declenſions in the divine life: that the influence of their example was likely to be miſchievous to thoſe who followed: that their juniors would much more readily imitate their defects than their virtues; in fine, that a foundation was already laid for the un-churching of this people, and for the deſolation in which this very region now remains under Mahometan wickedneſs and ignorance.

The Church of Smyrna is next addreſſed. It was at once in a ſtate of great purity of doctrine, and holineſs of heart and life. The Divine Saviour commends them in general. That, toward the end of the firſt century, they ſhould have preſerved the divine life in ſuch vigour,—a period of about forty years moſt probably, if indeed there had been no intermiſſions,—is ſomewhat extraordinary, and except in the caſe of Philadelphia, not eaſily paralleled in hiſtory:—So naturally does depravity prevail, in a courſe of time, over the beſt-conſtituted churches. But their tribulation and poverty are particularly marked.

marked. They were rich in heavenly grace, poor in worldly circumſtances. If poor Churches were fully ſenſible of the miſchiefs which often ariſe from the acceſſion of opulent individuals, they would not plume themſelves ſo much on that account as they often do. The Smyrnean Chriſtians were chiefly of the poorer ſort of inhabitants; yet were they infeſted with pretenders, of the ſame ſpirit as thoſe, who attempted to adulterate the Goſpel at Epheſus. It may be ſufficient to ſay, that they made large pretenſions to pure religion; that their corruptions were Judaical; and that they were under the influence of Satan. This Church is taught to expect a ſevere perſecution which was to laſt ſome time; and they are exhorted to perſevere in faith.

The Church of Pergamus was alſo approved of in general. They lived in the midſt of a very impious people, who, in effect, worſhipped Satan himſelf, and did all that in them lay to ſupport his kingdom. Yet was their zeal firm and ſteady. Nor was its object a few trifling punctilios, or ſome little niceties of doubtful diſputation, but the precious name of Chriſt himſelf, and the faith of his Goſpel. Hence they were expoſed not only to contempt, but to danger of life itſelf, and to cruel ſufferings. Our Lord mentions one perſon with particular complacency, "my faithful martyr Antipas." We know no more of him than what is here recorded,—that "he was ſlain among them, where Satan dwelt." But what an honour to be thus diſtinguiſhed! Volumes of panegyric have been compoſed for mere ſtateſmen, heroes, and ſcholars. How frigid do they all appear taken together, compared with this ſimple teſtimony of Jeſus! But this Church does not eſcape cenſure entirely. There were among them certain wicked

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and dangerous characters, who, acting like Balaam of old, were employed by Satan to entice perſons to eat things ſacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication;—two evils often cloſely connected: Even the abominations of the Nicolaitanes were practiſed by ſome. All theſe are exhorted to repent, from the fear of divine vengeance. On the whole, with a few exceptions, and thoſe indeed of an extraordinary degree of malignity, the Church of Pergamus was pure and lively, and upheld the ſtandard of truth, though encircled with the flames of martyrdom.

The Church of Thyatira was in a thriving ſtate. Charity, active ſervices, patient dependence on God, and a ſteady reliance on the divine promiſes, marked their works: and, what is peculiarly laudable, their laſt works were more excellent than their firſt *. A ſounder proof of genuine religion than ſuch a gradual improvement can ſcarce be conceived. Yet it is imputed as a fault to this Church, that they ſuffered an artful woman to ſeduce the people into the ſame evils, which had infected Pergamus. Her real name we know not: her allegorical name is Jezebel: ſhe reſembled the wife of Ahab, who kept four hundred prophets at her table, and exerted all her influence to promote idolatry. The people of God ſhould have counteracted her, but they did not: an advantage this, which deceitful guides have often gained through the negligence of the ſincere. The very ſex of the pretended propheteſs was a ſufficient reaſon why ſhe ſhould have been reſtrained. "Let your women keep ſilence in the Churches †," is an expreſs prohibition of females from the office of teaching, however uſeful in other reſpects pious women may be in the Church. Our Lord informs the

* Rev. ii. 19. † 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

the Church in Thyatira, that he gave her ſpace to repent, but to no purpoſe, and therefore now denounces ſevere threatenings againſt her and her aſſociates, at the ſame time vindicating his claim to divine worſhip by the incommunicable title of him who ſearches the hearts, and declaring that he would make himſelf known to be ſuch in all the Churches. To thoſe who had kept themſelves unſpotted from theſe evils, he declares "he would put no other burden on them:" only he exhorts them to hold faſt what they already had to the day of judgment. The unſound Chriſtians in this place pretended to great depths of knowledge, which were, in reality, depths of Satan.—Such perſons often impoſe on others, and are impoſed on themſelves by pretences to profound knowledge and to ſuperior degrees of ſanctity.

The Church of Sardis preſents us with an unpleaſing ſpectacle. Their great inferiority to Thyatira evinces, how poſſible it is for two ſocieties of Chriſtians holding the ſame doctrines, to be in a very different ſtate. He who "walks in the midſt of the Churches," extols the growing faith and charity of the firſt, and condemns the drooping condition of the ſecond. They had neglected that courſe of prayer and watchfulneſs, which is neceſſary to preſerve the divine life in vigour. Their works were now faintly diſtinguiſhable from thoſe of perſons altogether dead in ſin. Some* good things remained in them, which yet were ready to die: but their lives brought no glory to God, nor benefit to the cauſe of Chriſt; and could ſcarce prevent its being ſcandalized in the world. A few names indeed there were in Sardis, whom Jeſus looked on with complacency: they had not defiled their garments. But moſt of the Chriſtians there had

* Rev. iii.

had contracted deep ſtains, probably by freely mixing with the world, and by conforming to its cuſtoms. And we ſee here an awful fact authenticated in the higheſt poſſible manner,—that among a ſociety of perſons all profeſſing the Goſpel, the greater part may be very dead in their ſouls. It ſhould ever be remembered, that human nature is averſe to real faith, heavenly hope, and genuine charity. An omnipotent energy alone can produce or preſerve true holineſs. This had been the caſe at Sardis, when the Church partook of the firſt effuſion of the Spirit. Quite contrary to the uſual courſe of natural things, which are brought to perfection by ſlow and gradual improvements, in Chriſt's religion Godlineſs ſtarts up in the infancy of things in its beſt form. Seldom are the laſt works, as was the caſe at Thyatira, more abundant or more excellent. Hereſies, refinements, human cautions, commonly adulterate the work of God. An abuſe, perhaps, of ſome frantic enthuſiaſt appears: the correction of it by ſome preſumptuous pretender to reaſon introduces another more ſpecious, but more durable one. The love of the world increaſes with the abatement of perſecution. The natural propenſity of man to ſin exerts itſelf more and more: lively Chriſtians are removed by death: their juniors inferior in all ſolid godlineſs, ſuperior only in ſelf-eſtimation, reduce the ſtandard of Chriſtian grace lower and lower: apologies are invented for ſin: what was once experimentally known, becomes matter of barren ſpeculation: Even Scriptural terms themſelves expreſſive of vital religion are deſpiſed or ſparingly uſed: fainter and more polite modes of ſpeech, better adapted to claſſical neatneſs, but proper to hide and diſguiſe the ambiguities of ſcepticiſm, are introduced: the pride of reaſoning grows ſtrong: and men chuſe rather to run

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the riſque of hell itſelf, than to be thoroughly humbled. The ſtrong hand of God alone, in overbearing convictions and terrors, and in the ſweeteſt, but moſt powerful attractions of grace, can conquer this contemptuous ſpirit. No wonder then, that thoſe, who never felt, or who have quenched in a great meaſure theſe terrors and theſe attractions, relapſe into an impatient faſtidiouſneſs. And then the influence of the Holy Spirit itſelf is reaſoned againſt with petty cavils, and aſperſed by illiberal ſuſpicions. Unfaithful and unexperienced perſons, who undertake to teach in theſe circumſtances, will often, in attempting to diſcriminate the operations of the Spirit of God from deluſions, be unfeeling, rough, and unſkilful. To them weeds and flowers in the garden of Paradiſe will be the ſame thing. A malignant inſtinct of profane propenſity tempts them to pull up all together, till they leave only the love of the world, and, what they proudly call, common ſenſe; which laſt expreſſion will be found, at bottom, to denote a very miſchievous engine in religious matters; for, ſo applied, it means neither more nor leſs than ſimply, the natural, unaſſiſted powers of the human mind, darkened and corrupted, as they are, by the fall. And now, by frequent diſuſe, prayer and religious exerciſes grow diſagreeable: Senſual and worldly objects allure the carnal mind with ſucceſs: Lucrative ſpeculations in commerce devour the ſpirit of godly meditation: The ſeaſons of religious duty are joſtled out by the throng of buſineſs; and excuſes of neceſſity are eaſily admitted: Men find a pleaſure in being no longer reputed fanatics; and profeſſors will now aſk leave of the world, how far it will permit them to proceed in religion without offence.

I dare not ſay, that all this exactly took place at Sardis; but much of it did, no doubt; and on occaſion

occaſion of this firſt inſtance of a general declenſion, it ſeemed not unſeaſonable to point out its ordinary progreſs and ſymptoms.

The Chriſtians of Philadelphia are highly extolled. They were a humble, charitable, fervent people, deeply ſenſible of their own weakneſs, fearful of being ſeduced by Satan and their own hearts. The Spirit aſſures them, that they had a little ſtrength, which had at once been proved and exerted in holding faſt the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, and in detecting and reſiſting all adulterations of it. They are further aſſured, that the Judaical heretics ſhould be brought at length to ſubmit to become their diſciples in religion: And a promiſe of ſtrong ſupport is held out to them, becauſe they had maintained a true patience in ſuffering. To them, as to all the reſt of the Churches, the rewards beyond the grave are propoſed as the grand motives of perſeverance.

Laodicea too much reſembled Sardis. The people were in a LUKEWARM ſtate, a religious mediocrity, moſt odious to Chriſt; becauſe his religion calls for the whole vehemence of the ſoul, and bids us to be cool only in WORLDLY things. The foundation of this lukewarmneſs was laid in pride: They had loſt the conviction of their internal blindneſs, miſery, and depravity. When men go on for years in a placid unfeeling uniformity, this is always the caſe. They were ſatisfied with themſelves, and felt no need of higher attainments. The counſel, which is given to them,—to buy of him gold, white raiment, and eye-ſalve,—is precious; and this call to their ſouls demonſtrates that they had learnt to maintain, in eaſy indolence, an orthodoxy of ſentiments without any vivid attention to the Spirit of God:—In a word, his influence was only not deſpiſed in Laodicea.

Such

Such were the ſituations of the ſeven Churches of Aſia. The criticiſm is indeed ineſtimable: It is candid, impartial, and penetrating. He, who has indulged us with it, intended it for the uſe of all ſucceeding Churches: — and "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith to the Churches."

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

THE REMAINDER OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

IT is the obſervation of one of the antients, that St. Luke, in the cloſe of his Apoſtolical hiſtory, leaves the reader thirſting for more. I feel the force and juſtneſs of the thought at this moment. I have hitherto ſailed by the compaſs of Scripture; and now find myſelf at once entering into an immenſe ocean without a guide. In fact I have undertaken to conduct the reader through a long, obſcure, and difficult courſe, with ſcarce a beacon here and there ſet up to direct me: — but I muſt make the beſt uſe I can of the very ſcanty materials before me.

It ſeems plain, that the Apoſtles in general did not leave Judea, till after the firſt council held at Jeruſalem. They ſeem never to have been in haſte to quit the land of their nativity. Probably the threatening appearances of its deſolation by the Romans, haſtened their departure into diſtant regions. And before the cloſe of this century it appears, that the power of the Goſpel was felt throughout the Roman empire. I ſhall divide this chapter into four parts, and review, firſt, — The progreſs and perſecution of the Church. Secondly, — The lives, characters, and deaths of the Apoſtles and moſt celebrated Evangeliſts. Thirdly, — The hereſies of this period. And, laſtly, — The general character of Chriſtianity in this firſt age.

It was about the year of our Lord 64, that the city of Rome ſuſtained a general conflagration. A. D. 64.

The emperor Nero, loſt as he was to all ſenſe of reputation, and hackneyed in flagitiouſneſs, was yet ſtudious to avert the infamy of being reckoned the author of this calamity, which was generally imputed to him. But no ſteps that he could take were ſufficient to do away the ſuſpicion. There was, however, a particular claſs of people, ſo ſingularly diſtinct from the reſt of mankind, and ſo much hated on account of the condemnation which their doctrine and purity of life affixed to all except themſelves, that they might be calumniated with impunity. Theſe were then known at Rome by the name of Chriſtians. Unleſs we tranſplant ourſelves into thoſe times, we can ſcarce conceive how odious and contemptible the appellation then was. The judicious Tacitus calls their religion a deteſtable ſuperſtition *, "which at firſt was ſuppreſſed, and afterwards broke out afreſh, and ſpread not only through Judea the origin of the evil, but through the metropolis alſo, the common ſewer in which every thing filthy and flagitious meets and ſpreads." If ſo grave and cautious a writer as Tacitus can thus aſperſe the Chriſtians without proof and without moderation, we need not wonder, that ſo impure a wretch as Nero ſhould not heſitate to charge them with the fact of burning Rome.

Now it was that the Romans legally perſecuted the Church for the firſt time. And thoſe, who know the virulence of man's natural enmity, will rather wonder that it commenced not earlier, than that it raged at length with ſuch dreadful fury. "Some perſons were apprehended, who confeſſed themſelves Chriſtians; and by their evidence, ſays Tacitus, a great multitude afterwards were diſcovered and ſeized:—and they were condemned not ſo much for the burning of Rome, as for being the enemies

* Tacitus, B. xv.

enemies of mankind." A very remarkable accuſation! It may be explained as follows.—True Chriſtians, though the genuine friends of all their fellow-creatures, cannot allow men, who are NOT true Chriſtians, to be in the favour of God. Their very earneſtneſs, in calling on their neighbours to repent and believe the Goſpel, proves to thoſe neighbours in what a dangerous ſtate they are then apprehended to be. All, who are not moved by the admonitions of Chriſtian charity to flee from the wrath to come, will naturally be diſguſted; and thus the pureſt benevolence will be conſtrued into the moſt mercileſs bigotry. Thus Chriſtians incurred the general hatred, to which the conduct neither of Jews nor heretics rendered them obnoxious.—And the ſame cauſe produces ſimilar effects to this day.

Their execution was aggravated with inſult. They were covered with ſkins of wild beaſts and torn by dogs: they were crucified, and ſet on fire, that they might ſerve for lights in the night-time. Nero offered his gardens for this ſpectacle, and exhibited the games of the circus. People could not, however, avoid pitying them, baſe and undeſerving as they were in the eyes of Tacitus, becauſe they ſuffered not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of a tyrant. It appears from a paſſage in Seneca * compared with Juvenal, that Nero ordered them to be covered with wax, and other combuſtible materials: and, that after a ſharp ſtake was put under their chin, to make them continue upright, they were burnt alive to give light to the ſpectators †.

We have no account how the people of God conducted themſelves under theſe ſufferings. What we know of their behaviour in ſimilar ſcenes, leaves

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* Seneca, Ep. 14. Juv. 1 and 8 with his Scholiaſt.

† Bullet's Hiſtory of Eſtabliſhed Chriſtianity.

us in no doubt of their having been ſupported by the power of the Holy Ghoſt. Nor is it credible, that the perſecution would be confined to Rome. It would naturally ſpread through the empire; and one of Cyriac's inſcriptions found in Spain *, demonſtrates at once two important facts, — that the Goſpel had already penetrated into that country, and — that the Church there alſo had her martyrs.

Three or four years were, probably, the utmoſt extent of this tremendous perſecution, as in the
A. D. year 68 the tyrant was himſelf, by a dreadful exit,
68. ſummoned before the divine tribunal. He left the Roman world in a ſtate of extreme confuſion. Judea partook of it in a remarkable degree. About forty years after our Lord's ſufferings, wrath came on the body of the Jewiſh nation to the uttermoſt, in a manner too well known to need the leaſt relation in this hiſtory. What became of the Chriſtian Jews, alone concerns us. The congregation were commanded, by an oracle revealed to the beſt approved among them, that before the wars began, they ſhould depart from the city, and inhabit a village beyond Jordan, called Pella †. Thither they retired, and were ſaved from the deſtruction, which ſoon after overwhelmed their countrymen: and in ſo retiring they at once obſerved the precept, and fulfilled the well-known prophecy of their Saviour. The death of Nero, and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, would naturally occaſion ſome reſpite to them from their ſufferings; and we hear no more of their perſecuted ſtate, till the reign of Domitian,
A. D. the laſt of the Flavian family, who ſucceeded to
81. the empire in the year 81.

He does not appear to have raged againſt the Chriſtians, till the latter end of his reign. Indeed, in

* See Gibbon's Account of Chriſtianity conſidered, p. 94.

† Euſeb. B. 3. C. 5.

in imitation of his father Veſpaſian, he made enquiry for ſuch of the Jews as were deſcended from the royal line of David. His motives were evidently political. But there wanted not thoſe who were glad of any opportunity of wreaking their malice on Chriſtians. Some perſons, who were brought before the emperor, were charged with being related to the royal family. They appear to have been related to our Lord, and were grandſons of Jude the Apoſtle, his couſin. Domitian aſked them, if they were of the family of David, which they acknowledged. He then demanded, what poſſeſſions they enjoyed, and what money they had. They laid open the poverty of their circumſtances, and owned that they maintained themſelves by their labour. The truth of their confeſſion was evidenced by their hands, and by their appearance in general. Domitian then interrogated them concerning Chriſt and his kingdom,—when and where it ſhould appear? They anſwered, like their Maſter when queſtioned by Pilate,—that his kingdom was not of this world, but heavenly: that its glory ſhould appear at the conſummation of the world, when he ſhould judge the quick and dead, and reward every man according to his works. Poverty is ſometimes a defence againſt oppreſſion, though it never ſhields from contempt. Domitian was ſatisfied, that his throne was in no danger from Chriſtian ambition: and the grandſons of Jude were diſmiſſed with the ſame ſort of deriſion, with which their Saviour had formerly been diſmiſſed by Herod. Thus had the Son of God provided for his indigent relations:—they were poor in circumſtances, but rich in faith, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom.

As Domitian increaſed in cruelty, toward the end of his reign he renewed the horrors of Nero's

perſecution. He * put to death many perſons accuſed of atheiſm, the common charge againſt Chriſtians, on account of their refuſal to worſhip the pagan gods. Among theſe was the conſul Flavius Clemens his couſin, who had eſpouſed Flavia Domitilla his relation. Suetonius obſerves, that this man was quite deſpicable on account of his ſlothfulneſs. Many others were condemned likewiſe, who had embraced Jewiſh cuſtoms, ſays Dion; part of them were put to death, others ſpoiled of their goods, and Domitilla herſelf was baniſhed into the Iſland of Pandataria. Euſebius records the ſame facts with ſome little variation: but, as he profeſſes to borrow from the pagan writers in this inſtance, I ſhall be content with their account.

It is not hard to conceive the real characters of thoſe two noble perſons. It ought not to be doubted that they were genuine Chriſtians, whom God had diſtinguiſhed by his grace, and enabled to live upon it, and to ſuffer for it. The blood of the Cæſars, and the ſplendor of the imperial houſe, rendered them only more conſpicuous objects of diſguſt. It is well known that no poſitive crime is aſcribed to either of them. The charge of indolence againſt the huſband is natural enough, and does honour to the heavenly-mindedneſs of the man, whoſe ſpirit could not mix with the evils of ſecular ambition, and with the vices of the imperial court.—The humanity of the times in which we live, and the bleſſings of the civil freedom which the ſubjects of theſe kingdoms enjoy, protect us, it is true, from ſimilar dangers of life or property; nevertheleſs, who has not obſerved that even rank and dignity are among us expoſed to conſiderable contempt, whenever a man is conſpicuous and eminent for a zealous profeſſion and diligent practice

* Euſeb. B. III. 17. Dion Caſſius.

practice of truly Evangelical doctrines and precepts?

In the year 96 Domitian was ſlain: and Nerva, A. D. the ſucceeding emperor, publiſhed a pardon * for 96. thoſe who were condemned for impiety, recalled thoſe who were baniſhed, and forbad the accuſing of any men on account of impiety, or Judaiſm. Others, who were under accuſation or under ſentence of condemnation, now eſcaped by the lenity of Nerva. This brings us to the cloſe of the century, in which we behold the Chriſtians, for the preſent, in a ſtate of external peace. One perſon alone enjoyed not the benefit of Nerva's mildneſs. Domitilla ſtill continued in exile, probably becauſe ſhe was a relation of the late tyrant, whoſe name was now odious through the world.—Doubtleſs ſhe was not forſaken of her God and Saviour.

II. The Apoſtles and Evangeliſts of this period, were their ſtory diſtinctly known, and circumſtantially related, would afford materials indeed of the rareſt pleaſure to every Chriſtian mind. But there never aroſe in the Church any hiſtorians like Thucydides and Livy, to illuſtrate and celebrate the actions of ſaints. Heroes and ſtateſmen have their reward here,—ſaints hereafter. Chriſt's kingdom muſt not appear to be of this world; and while large volumes have been filled with the exploits of heroes, and the intrigues of ſtateſmen, the men, who were the divine inſtruments of evangelizing ſouls,—the New Teſtament hiſtory excepted,—are for the moſt part unknown.

The firſt of the twelve Apoſtles who ſuffered martyrdom, we have ſeen, was James the ſon of Zebedee: He fell a ſacrifice to Herod Agrippa's ambitious deſire of popularity. I recall him to the reader's memory on account of a remarkable circum-

* Dion.

circumſtance attending his death*. The man, who had drawn him before the tribunal, when he ſaw the readineſs with which he ſubmitted to martyrdom, was ſtruck with remorſe; and, by one of thoſe ſudden converſions not infrequent amidſt the remarkable effuſions of the Spirit, was himſelf turned from the power of Satan to God. He confeſſed Chriſt with great cheerfulneſs. James and this man were both led to execution; and in the way thither the accuſer requeſted the Apoſtle's forgiveneſs, which he obtained. James turning to him anſwered, "Peace be to thee;" and kiſſed him; and they were beheaded together. The efficacy of Divine Grace, and the bleſſed fruit of holy example, are both illuſtrated in this ſtory, of which it were to be wiſhed we knew more than the very ſcanty account which has been delivered.

The other James was preſeved in Judea to a much later period. His martrydom took place
A. D. about the year 62; and his epiſtle was publiſhed
62. a little before his death. As he always reſided at Jeruſalem, and was providentially preſerved through various perſecutions, he had an opportunity of overcoming enmity itſelf, and abating prejudice, in ſome meaſure. The name of JUST was generally given him on account of his ſingular innocence and integrity. And, as he conformed to Jewiſh cuſtoms with more than occaſional regularity, he was by no means ſo odious in the eyes of his unbelieving countrymen, as the Apoſtle of the Gentiles. But we are to obſerve that if he had fully overcome their enmity, he could not have been faithful to his Lord and Maſter. Many Jews reſpected the man, and admired the FRUITS of the Goſpel in him. The root and principle of theſe fruits was ſtill their

* Euſeb. i. 9.

their abhorrence; and from the relation of Euſebius, the teſtimony of Hegeſippus, an early Chriſtian hiſtorian whom he quotes, and of Joſephus, it is plain, that it was thought a pitiable thing, that ſo good a man ſhould be a Chriſtian. Paul's eſcape from Jewiſh malice, by appealing to Cæſar, had ſharpened the ſpirits of this people; and they were determined to wreak their vengeance on James, who was merely a Jew, and could plead no Roman exemptions. Feſtus died preſident of Judea; and, before his ſucceſſor Albinus arrived, Ananias the high-prieſt, a Sadducee and a mercileſs perſecutor, held the ſupreme power in the interim. He called a council, before which he ſummoned James with ſome others, and accuſed them of breaking the law of Moſes.—But it was not eaſy to procure his condemnation.—His holy life had long ſecured the veneration of his countrymen *.

The leading men were uneaſy on account of the vaſt increaſe of Chriſtian converts by his labours, example and authority: and they endeavoured to entangle him, by perſuading him to mount a pinnacle of the temple, and to ſpeak to the people aſſembled at the time of the paſſover, againſt Chriſtianity. James being placed aloft, delivered a frank confeſſion of Jeſus; and declared that he was then ſitting at the right hand of power, and that he ſhould come in the clouds of heaven. Upon this Ananias and the rulers were highly incenſed.—To diſgrace his character was their firſt intention.—They failed.—To murder his perſon was

* I have compared Joſephus's account with that of Hegeſippus, which laſt appears compatible enough with the former, and no way improbable; though I think he gives his character more of the aſcetic, than I believe to be conſiſtent with that of a Chriſtian Apoſtle.

was their next attempt; and this was of much more eaſy execution. Crying out, that Juſtus himſelf was ſeduced, they threw the Apoſtle down, and ſtoned him. He had ſtrength to fall on his knees, and to pray, "I beſeech thee, Lord God and Father, for them; for they know not what they do." One of the prieſts, moved with the ſcene, cried out, "Ceaſe, what do you mean? This juſt man is praying for you." A perſon preſent with a fuller's club beat out his brains, and completed his martyrdom.

Very remarkable is the acknowledgement of Joſephus. "Theſe things"—meaning the miſeries of the Jews from the Romans—"happened to them by way of revenging the death of James the Juſt, the brother of Jeſus whom they call Chriſt. For the Jews ſlew him, though a very juſt man*." And from the ſame writer we learn, that Albinus ſeverely reprimanded Ananias, and ſoon after deprived him of the high-prieſthood.

After

* I ſee no reaſon to doubt the authenticity of this paſſage; which gives abundant confirmation to his famous teſtimony of Chriſt; which is as follows. "About this time lived Jeſus a wiſe man; if indeed we may call him a man; for he performed marvellous things; he was an inſtructor of ſuch as embraced the truth with pleaſure. He made many converts both among the Jews and Greeks. This was the Chriſt. And when Pilate, on the accuſation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the croſs, thoſe, who before entertained a reſpect for him, continued ſtill ſo to do; for he appeared to them alive again on the third day; the divine prophets having declared theſe and many other wonderful things concerning him. And the ſect of Chriſtians ſo named from him ſubſiſts to this very time."

I have examined, as carefully as I can, the doubts which have been ſtarted on the authenticity of this paſſage. To me they ſeem mere ſurmiſes. One of them, the ſuppoſed inconſiſtency of the hiſtorian, in teſtifying ſo much of Chriſt, and yet remaining an unconverted Jew, affords an argument in its favour.

After the death of James and the deſolation of Jeruſalem, the Apoſtles and diſciples of our Lord, of whom many were yet alive, gathered themſelves together with our Lord's kinſmen, to appoint a paſtor of the Church of Jeruſalem in the room of James. The election fell on Simeon, the ſon of that Cleopas mentioned by St. Luke as one of the two, who went to Emmaus, and who was the brother of Joſeph, our Lord's reputed father.—We ſhall leave Simeon at the end of this century the chief paſtor of the Jewiſh Church.

Paul the Apoſtle ſeems to have laboured with unwearied activity from about the year 36 to the year 63, that is, from his converſion to the period in which St. Luke finiſhes his hiſtory. Within this period he wrote fourteen epiſtles, which will be the bleſſed means of feeding the ſouls of the faithful to the end of time. The ſecond epiſtle to Timothy has been commonly ſuppoſed to have been written juſt before his martyrdom. I am convinced by Dr. Lardner's reaſonings*, that it was more probably written during his two years impriſonment at Rome, and that he was under no particular apprehenſion of ſuffering immediately †. From this epiſtle it is evident, that he had already been called before Nero, agreeably to the predic-

tion,

favour. Inconſiſtencies ought to be expected from inconſiſtent perſons. Such are many in the Chriſtian world at this day, who in like circumſtances would have acted a ſimilar part. Such was Joſephus. He knew and had ſtudied ſomething of all ſorts of opinions in religion; and his writings ſhew him to have been firm in nothing but a regard to his worldly intereſt. To me he ſeems to ſay juſt ſo much and no more of Chriſt, as might be expected from a learned ſceptic, of remarkable good ſenſe, and ſupreme love of worldly things.

* See the Supplement to the Credibility.

† This ſeems evident by his charging Timothy to come to him before winter.

tion, "thou muſt be brought before Cæſar;" and that no Chriſtian, not even any of thoſe, who had welcomed his arrival in Italy, durſt appear in ſupport of him:—He feelingly complains, "all men forſook me." Yet he knew how to diſtinguiſh between malevolence and timidity; and, therefore, though he could not excuſe their neglect of him, he prays God that it might not be laid to their charge. The terror of Nero ſeems to have overawed the Roman Chriſtians, many of whom might have born witneſs in his favour. Even Demas forſook him, from the love of the world, and departed to Theſſalonica. There are ſeaſons of critical danger, which try the hearts of the trueſt Chriſtians: It was yet a new thing for a Chriſtian to be brought before an emperor, and they had not prepared themſelves by watching and prayer for the uncommon occaſion. But the Grace of the Lord Jeſus, which had hitherto been ſo eminently with the Apoſtle, forſook him not in his trying moments: The Lord "ſtood with him, and ſtrengthened him*:" He was enabled to teſtify for Chriſt and his Goſpel before Nero, with the ſame frankneſs, fortitude, and eloquence, that he had formerly done before Felix, Feſtus, and Agrippa; and for the firſt time, and probably the laſt, the murderous tyrant Nero heard the glad tidings of ſalvation. It ſeems, by the expreſſion, —"that all the Gentiles might hear,"—that Paul was heard in a very full and ſolemn aſſembly, and had an opportunity of giving a clear account of Chriſtianity. And as ſome of Cæſar's houſhold are mentioned as ſaints in the epiſtle to the Philippians, there is reaſon to apprehend, that the preaching was not in vain. He was, as he owns, "delivered from the mouth of the lion." Nero had

* 2 Tim. iv. 17.

had not then begun to perſecute; and at leaſt he would ſee the juſtneſs of his plea as a Roman citizen, and be diſpoſed to favour it. Nor ought the adorable Providence of God to be paſſed in ſilence, who gave this man of abandoned wickedneſs an opportunity of hearing the word of ſalvation, though it made no uſeful impreſſion on his mind. Paul ſeems to have had this audience during the former part of his impriſonment at Rome, and to have been remanded to his confinement for the preſent.

Here he wrote the epiſtles to the Philippians and Coloſſians before the end of the year 62. A. D. From the former of theſe it appears, that the 62. whole court of Nero was made acquainted with his caſe, and that the cauſe of the Goſpel was promoted by theſe means. In the epiſtle to Philemon, which accompanied that to the Coloſſians, he expreſſes a confidence of being ſoon ſet at liberty, and promiſes, in that caſe, ſhortly to pay them a viſit*. And as he mentions Demas with reſpect as his fellow-labourer, both in this epiſtle to the Coloſſians, and in that to Philemon, I apprehend Demas had repented of his puſillanimity, and was returned to the Apoſtle and to his duty. This is the ſecond caſe in which it pleaſed God to make uſe of this extraordinary man, St. Paul, for the preſervation of the Church. The former inſtance reſpected the doctrine of juſtification, from which even Apoſtles were indirectly declining: The latter conſiſted in the exhibition of a godly ſpirit of zeal and an open confeſſion of Chriſt. Such is the ſloth and cowardice of man in

* I follow Dr. Lardner in the dates of the epiſtles, which he has inveſtigated with ſingular diligence and ſagacity; and I once for all acknowledge my repeated obligations to him in things of this nature.

in divine things, and ſo little need is there to teach us caution and reſerve, that unleſs God now and then ſtirred up the ſpirits of ſome eminent Chriſtian heroes, to venture through difficulties, and to ſtand foremoſt for the truth againſt oppoſition, Satan would bear down all before him. Paul was one of the firſt of theſe heroes: and we ſhall ſee in every age, that God raiſes up ſome perſons of this hardy temper, whom worldly men never fail contemptuouſly to denominate fanatics, becauſe they diſcover that greatneſs of ſoul in a heavenly cauſe, which, in an earthly one, would excite reſpect and admiration.

A. D. 63. Having obtained his liberty in the year 63, he moſt probably would ſoon fulfil his promiſe to viſit the Hebrews; after which he might ſee his Coloſſian friends. There is no certain account of his coming either to Jeruſalem or to Coloſſe; but moſt probably he executed what he had a little before promiſed. That he ever viſited Spain or our Iſland, is, to ſay no more, extremely doubtful. Of the laſt there is a very unfounded report, and of the former no other proof, than the mention of his intention in the epiſtle to the Romans, which had been written in the year 58, ſince which time all his meaſures had been diſconcerted. And if he once more made an Aſiatic tour after his departure from Rome, there ſeems not time enough for his accompliſhing the weſtern journey, as he ſuffered

A. D. 64. martyrdom on his return to Rome in 64 or 65. He could have had no great pleaſure at Jeruſalem: every thing was there haſtening to ruin. No man was ever poſſeſſed of a more genuine patriotic ſpirit than this Apoſtle. The Jewiſh war, which com-

A. D. 66. menced in 66, would have much afflicted him, had he lived to ſee it. But returning to Rome about a year before, he fell in with the very time when

when Rome was burnt, and Chriſtians were accuſed as incendiaries. He now found no mercy in Nero, who would naturally be diſpleaſed at the effect, which he had obſerved the preaching of the Apoſtle had produced in his own houſhold. A cup-bearer and a concubine of the Emperor had been, through Paul's means, converted to the faith, as Chryſoſtom aſſures us: and this haſtened his death.—He was ſlain with the ſword by Nero's order *.

He had many fellow-labourers, whoſe names he has immortalized in his writings. He calls Titus his own ſon after the common faith †. Timothy was alſo a particular favourite. Antiquity regards the former as the firſt biſhop of Crete, and the latter as the firſt biſhop of Epheſus. Luke of Antioch, the writer of the third Goſpel, and the faithful relater, in the Acts of the Apoſtles, of this Apoſtle's tranſactions, of which he was an eye-witneſs, is, by him, affectionately denominated the beloved Phyſician.—He ſeems to have retired into Greece after St. Paul's firſt diſmiſſion by the emperor, and there to have written both his ineſtimable treatiſes about the year 63 or 64. A. D. 63.

Creſcens, whom Paul ſent to Galatia, is another of his fellow-labourers. Linus, the firſt biſhop of Rome, may be added to the liſt, and Dionyſius the Areopagite of Athens, whom Euſebius reckons the firſt biſhop of the Church in that city.

We have now finiſhed the lives of two men, of ſingular excellence unqueſtionably, James the Juſt and Paul of Tarſus. The former, by his uncommon virtues, attracted the eſteem of a whole people, who were full of the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt him: and in regard to the latter, the queſtion may be aſked with great propriety, whether ſuch another man

* Oroſius, B. 7. † Titus i. 4.

man ever exiſted among all thoſe, who have inherited the corrupted nature of Adam? He had evidently a ſoul large and capacious, and poſſeſſed of thoſe ſeemingly contradictory excellencies which, wherever they appear in combination, fail not to form an extraordinary character. But not only his talents were great and various—his learning alſo was profound and extenſive; and many perſons with far inferior abilities and attainments have effected national revolutions, or otherwiſe diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the hiſtory of mankind. His conſummate fortitude was tempered with the rareſt gentleneſs, and the moſt active charity. His very copious and vivid imagination was chaſtized by the moſt accurate judgment, and was connected with the cloſeſt argumentative powers. Divine Grace alone could compoſe ſo wonderful a temperature; inſomuch, that for the ſpace of near thirty years after his converſion, this man, whoſe natural haughtineſs and fiery temper had hurried him into a very ſanguinary courſe of perſecution, lived the friend of mankind; returned good for evil continually; was a model of patience and benevolence, and ſteadily attentive only to heavenly things, while yet he had a taſte, a ſpirit, and a genius, which might have ſhone among the greateſt ſtateſmen and men of letters that ever lived.

We have then, in theſe two men, a ſtrong ſpecimen of what Grace can do, and we may fairly challenge all the infidels in the world, to produce any thing like them in the whole liſt of their heroes. Yet amidſt the conſtant diſplay of every godly and ſocial virtue, we learn from Paul's own account, that he ever felt himſelf "carnal, ſold under ſin," and that ſin dwelt in him continually. From his writings we learn, what the depth of human wickedneſs is: and none of the Apoſtles ſeem to have under-

underſtood ſo much as he did, the riches of Divine Grace, and the peculiar glory of the Chriſtian religion. The doctrines of election, juſtification, regeneration, adoption; of the prieſthood and offices of Chriſt, and of the internal work of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as the moſt perfect morality founded on Chriſtian principle, are to be found in his writings; and what Quintilian ſaid of Cicero may be juſtly applied to the Apoſtle of the Gentiles: "*Ille ſe profeciſſe ſciat, cui Paulus valde placebit.*"

During this whole effuſion of the Spirit,—of ſo little account in the ſight of God are natural human excellencies and talents,—I ſee no evidence that any perſons of extraordinary genius and endowments, St. Paul excepted, were employed in the divine work of propagating the Goſpel. St. Luke, indeed, appears by his writings to have been a claſſical ſcholar of a chaſtized and regular taſte; and to approach more nearly to attic purity of diction than any of the New Teſtament writers. But to St. Paul the greatneſs of his conceptions, and the fervour of his zeal, give a magnificent kind of negligence in compoſition,—in the midſt of which there is alſo, if I miſtake not, a vaſt aſſemblage of the moſt ſublime excellencies of oratory, which demonſtrate how high he might have ſtood in this line of eminence, had he been ambitious, or rather had he not been perfectly careleſs of ſuch kind of fame. But that men ſo unlearned as the reſt of the Apoſtles were,—none of whom appear by nature to have been above the ordinary ſtandard of mankind, though by no means below that ſtandard,—that ſuch men ſhould have been able of themſelves to ſpeak, to act, and to write as they did; and to produce ſuch an amazing revolution in the ideas and manners of mankind, would require the moſt extravagant credulity to

believe.—The power of God is demonſtrated from the imbecility of the inſtruments.

The minds of men void of the love of God are always apt to ſuſpect, as connected with Fanaticiſm, the moſt precious myſteries of the Goſpel, and the whole work of experimental religion. And the more vigorouſly theſe things are deſcribed, the ſtronger the ſuſpicion grows. May not this have been one reaſon why St. Paul was directed to expoſe himſelf the moſt to this unjuſt cenſure, by dwelling more copiouſly than any of the reſt of the Apoſtles on views moſt directly evangelical;—St. Paul, I ſay,—becauſe he muſt be allowed by all who are not willing to betray their own want of diſcernment, to have been a man of eminent ſolidity of underſtanding? If Chriſtian experience be a fooliſh thing indeed, it is ſtrange that the wiſeſt of all the Chriſtians ſhould have been the moſt abundant in deſcribing it.

Of St. Peter we have by no means ſo large an account as of St. Paul. The laſt view we have ot him in Scripture preſents him to us at Antioch.
A. D. This was probably about the year 50. After this
50. he was employed in ſpreading the Goſpel,—principally among his own countrymen, but one cannot ſuppoſe excluſively of Gentiles,—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, and Bithynia. His two epiſtles were directed to the Hebrew converts of theſe countries. And if he was far leſs ſucceſsful than Paul among the Gentiles, he was much more ſo than that great man was among the Jews. He, who wrought effectually in the one among the former, was mighty in the other among the latter *. It ſhould ever be remembered, WHO alone did the work, and gave the increaſe.

A. D. Peter probably came to Rome about the year 63.
63. Thence, a little before his martyrdom he wrote his two

* Gal. ii. 8.

two epiſtles. Strange fictions have been invented of his acts at Rome, of which I ſhall ſufficiently teſtify my diſbelief by ſilence,—the method which I intend conſtantly to uſe in things of this nature. It is evident, however, that he here met again with that ſame Simon the ſorcerer, whom he had rebuked long ago in Samaria, and who was practiſing his ſorceries in a much higher ſtile in the metropolis. No doubt the Apoſtle oppoſed him ſucceſsfully; but we have no account of this matter, except a very vague and declamatory one by Euſebius.—At length, when Paul was martyred under Nero, Peter ſuffered with him by crucifixion with his head downward,—a kind of death which he himſelf deſired,—moſt probably from an unfeigned humility, that he might not die in the ſame manner as his Lord had done. Nicephorus informs us, that he had ſpent two years at Rome. St. Peter, in his ſecond epiſtle, obſerves, that his Lord had ſhewn him, that his death was ſoon to take place. And this gives a degree of credibility to a ſtory of Ambroſe related in one of his diſcourſes, the purport of which is, that the pagans being inflamed againſt him, the brethren begged him to retreat during the violence of the perſecution. Their intreaties, ardent as he was for martyrdom, moved him. He began to go out of the city by night. But coming to the gate *, he ſaw Chriſt entering into the city. Whereupon he ſaid, Lord, whither art thou going? Chriſt anſwered, I am coming hither to be crucified again. Peter hence underſtood that Chriſt was to be crucified again in his ſervant. This induced him voluntarily to return; and he ſatisfied the minds of the brethren with this account, and was ſoon after ſeized and crucified. Whoever conſiders the very ſolemn manner in which our Lord foretold

* Sermon cont. Aux. i. 11.

foretold the violent death of this Apoſtle, in the cloſe of St. John's Goſpel; and that, in his ſecond epiſtle, he himſelf declares that his Divine Maſter had ſhewn him, that he ſhould quickly put off his tabernacle, will find no difficulty in conceiving, that the viſion * now related from Ambroſe might have taken place a little time before the writing of this epiſtle; and, that the writing of the epiſtle may have a little time preceded his ſeizure and violent death. I mention this as a probable conjecture only. The ſtory itſelf is conſonant to the miraculous powers then in the Church; and its evidence reſts on the character of Ambroſe himſelf, an Italian biſhop, whoſe integrity and underſtanding are equally reſpectable.

Peter's wife had been called to martyrdom a little before himſelf. He ſaw her led to death, and rejoiced at the grace of God vouchſafed to her; and addreſſing her by name, exhorted and comforted her with "Remember the Lord †."

There are two ſtriking atteſtations to the character of St. Peter, which may be fairly drawn from the ſacred writings. As it is allowed on all hands, that he authorized the publication of St. Mark's Goſpel, had he been diſpoſed to ſpare his own character, he would not have ſuffered the ſhameful denial of his Maſter to have been deſcribed, as it is in that Evangeliſt, with more aggravated circumſtances of guilt, and with fainter views of his repentance, than are to be found in the other Evangeliſts. I am indebted for the other remark to Biſhop Gregory, the firſt of that name. In his ſecond epiſtle St. Peter gives the moſt honourable atteſtation to the Apoſtle Paul's epiſtles, though he muſt know,

* There is no neceſſity to conſider Chriſt's appearance as any thing more than a viſion.

† Clement. Strom. 7.

know, that in one of them,—that to the Galatians, —his own conduct on a particular occaſion was cenſured. This is evidently above nature. The moſt unfeigned humility appears to have been an eminent part of the character of this Apoſtle, who, in his early days, was remarkable for the violence of his temper. His natural character was no uncommon one. Frank, open, active, courageous; ſanguine in his attachments and in his paſſions; no way deficient, but not eminent, in underſtanding, —a plain honeſt man; yet, by grace and ſupernatural wiſdom, rendered an inſtrument of the greateſt good in the converſion of numbers, and only inferior to St. Paul.—He ſeems to have lived long in a ſtate of matrimony; and by Clement's account, was induſtrious in the education of his children.

Mark was ſiſter's ſon to Barnabas, the ſon of Mary, a pious woman of Jeruſalem. He was probably brought up in Chriſtianity from early life; and his conduct, for ſome time, gives a credibility to an opinion, tolerably confirmed by experience, that early converts, or thoſe who have been religiouſly brought up, do not make that vigorous progreſs in divine things generally, which thoſe do, whoſe converſion has commenced after a life of much ſin and vanity. Their views are apt to be faint, and their diſpoſitions in religion languid and indolent. We are told by Epiphanius, that Mark was one of thoſe who were offended at the words of Chriſt recorded in the 6th chapter of St. John; and that he then forſook him, but was afterwards recovered to his Saviour by means of Peter. After our Lord's aſcenſion, he attended his uncle Barnabas with Paul; but ſoon left them and returned to Jeruſalem. Barnabas however hoping the beſt from one, whom he held ſo dear, propoſed him to Paul as their

companion on ſome future occaſion. After the rupture, which this occaſioned, between the two Apoſtles, Barnabas took him as his companion to Cyprus. Undoubtedly his character improved. Some plants are ſlow of growth, but attain at length great vigour, and bear much fruit. Even Paul himſelf, who had been ſo much offended with him, at length declared, "he is profitable to me for the miniſtry".* From the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, it is evident that he was with the Apoſtle in his impriſonment at Rome. This was in the
A. D. year 62. His Goſpel was written by the deſire
62. of the believers at Rome about two years after. I know not when to fix the time of his coming to Egypt. But he is allowed to have founded the Church of Alexandria, and to have been buried there. He was ſucceeded by Anianus, of whom Euſebius gives the higheſt eulogium. It is evident, that the ſociety of thoſe three great men, Barnabas, Paul, and Peter, at different times was very uſeful to him. Probably his natural indolence needed ſuch incentives. In Mark then we ſeem to have noticed one of the firſt promoters of Chriſtianity, of a caſt of mind different from any we have hitherto reviewed.—The variety of tempers and talents employed in the ſervice of God and ſanctified by the ſame divine energy, affords a field of ſpeculation neither unpleaſing nor unprofitable.

Of the labours of nine Apoſtles, James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Jude, Simon, and Matthias, ſcarcely any thing is recorded.

Of John the Apoſtle a few valuable fragments
A. D. may be collected. He was preſent at the council
50. of Jeruſalem, which was held about the year 50: nor is it probable, that he left Judea till that time.

* 2 Tim. iv .2.

time. Aſia Minor was the great theatre of his miniſtry, particularly Epheſus, the care of which Church remained with him after the deceaſe of the reſt of the Apoſtles. The breaking out of the war in Judea would probably oblige the Apoſtle to bid a total farewell to his native country.— While he reſided at Epheſus, going once to bathe there, he perceived that Cerinthus was in the bath: He came out again haſtily: Let us flee, ſays he, leſt the bath ſhould fall, while Cerinthus, an enemy of truth, is within it. The ſame ſtory is told of Ebion as well as of Cerinthus: they were both heretics, and of a ſimilar character: and it is an eaſy miſtake for a reporter of the ſtory to confound names; but if the whole ſhould have had no foundation, it is not eaſy to account for the fiction. The teſtimony of Irenæus, who had it from perſons who received their information from Polycarp the diſciple of St. John, ſeems ſufficiently authentic. Irenæus, a man of exquiſite judgment, evidently believed the ſtory himſelf; and ſurely the opinion of ſuch a perſon, who lived near thoſe times, muſt outweigh the fanciful criticiſms and objections of modern authors. The faſhion of the preſent age, humanely ſceptical, and clothing profane indifference with the name of candour, is ever ready to ſeduce even good men into a diſbelief of facts of this nature, however well atteſted. But let the circumſtances of St. John be well conſidered. He was a ſurviving Apoſtolical luminary. Heretical pravity was deeply ſpreading its poiſon. Sentiments, very derogatory to the perſon, work, and honour of Jeſus Chriſt, were diffuſed with great perverſeneſs of induſtry. What ſhould have been the deportment of this truly benevolent Apoſtle? I doubt not but he was ever forward to relieve perſonal diſtreſſes: but to have joined the

company of the principal ſupporters of hereſy, would have been to countenance it. He well knew the arts of ſeducers. They were ready always to avail themſelves of the ſeeming countenance of Apoſtles or of apoſtolical men; and thence to take an opportunity of ſtrengthening themſelves, and of diffuſing their poiſon. Such has been their conduct in all ages. Having no ground of their own to ſtand on, they have continually endeavoured to reſt on the authority of ſome great man of allowed evangelical reſpectability. This artful management, clothed with the pretence of charity, points out to the real friends of the Lord Jeſus, what they ought to do, from motives of real benevolence to mankind,—namely, to bear patiently the odious charge of bigotry, and to take every opportunity of teſtifying their abhorrence of heretical views and hypocritical actions. Humanly ſpeaking, I ſee not how divine truth is to be ſupported in the world, but by this procedure; and I ſcruple not to ſay, that St. John's conduct appears not only defenſible, but laudable, and worthy the imitation of Chriſtians. It is agreeable to what he himſelf declares in one of his ſhort epiſtles, addreſſed to a Chriſtian lady,—that if "any come to her houſe, and bring not the true doctrine of the Goſpel, ſhe ought not to receive him, nor bid him God ſpeed; becauſe to bid him God ſpeed, would make her partaker of his evil deeds." His menacing language concerning Diotrephes, in the other epiſtle to Gaius, breathes, what ſome would call, the ſame uncharitable ſpirit. And when I ſee St. Paul ſhaking his garment againſt the infidel Jews, and hear him ſaying, "Your blood be on your own heads, I am clean;" and when I find him warning the Galatians thus, "If an angel from heaven ſhould preach any other doctrine,

doctrine, let him be accurſed," and wiſhing that they which troubled them, "were even cut off,"—I am inſtructed how to judge of the indignation of holy St. John againſt Cerinthus.

Indeed the primitive Chriſtians were even more careful to avoid the ſociety of falſe Chriſtians than of open unbelievers. With the latter they had, at times, ſome free intercourſe; with the former they refuſed even to eat *.—We have already ſeen, how our Saviour commends the impatience and diſcernment of the Epheſians, who could not bear falſe profeſſors.—They had tried thoſe who call themſelves "Apoſtles, and are not; and had found them liars."

It is one of the deſigns of this hiſtory, to ſhew the actual conduct of real Chriſtians in life and converſation: and the relation before us, of John's behaviour to Cerinthus, illuſtrates this. But,—if we muſt ſo far humour the taſte of Socinians and ſceptics as to allow ourſelves to doubt the exiſtence of well-atteſted facts becauſe they contradict the faſhionable torrent, we ſhall injure the faithfulneſs of hiſtory, make preſent manners the ſtandard of credibility, and ſeem to agree to a very abſurd modiſh poſition,—that the divine charity of a ſound Chriſtian, is the ſame thing as the refined humanity of a philoſophical heretic.—I would aſk any perſon, to whom the infection of modern manners renders this reaſoning of difficult digeſtion, whether he ought more to approve of the conduct of one gentleman who ſhould mix in eaſy familiarity with a company of murderers, or of another who ſhould fly from it with horror. If we believe ſpiritual murderers, who labour to ruin ſouls by propagating Anti-chriſtian views, to be ſtill more pernicious than the former, we

* 1 Cor. v. 10, 11.

we ſhall not be under any difficulty in vindicating St. John.

The unreaſonable doubts that have ariſen in our times concerning the fact we have been conſidering, appear to me to originate in a ſpirit of hereſy. There is another fact, reſpecting this ſame Apoſtle, which comes before us loaded with ſimilar ſceptical objections: and theſe are to be aſcribed, I fear, to the prevalence of deiſm. Tertullian * tells us, that, by order of Domitian, John was caſt into a caldron of boiling oil, and came out again without being hurt. This muſt have happened, moſt probably, during the latter part of the reign of that emperor; and Tertullian was certainly competent to relate ſuch a fact as this:—Yet it is now generally diſbelieved or doubted. Is it becauſe we ſee no miracles in our own times? Let the reader tranſport himſelf into the firſt century; and he will ſee no more improbability, in the nature of the thing, that a miracle ſhould be wrought in favour of St. John, than in favour of Paul, as recorded in the laſt chapter of the Acts. The miracle ſoftened not the heart of Domitian, who would probably ſuppoſe the Apoſtle to have been fortified by magical incantations. He baniſhed him into the ſolitary Iſle of Patmos, where he was favoured with the viſions of the Apocalypſe. After Domitian's death he returned from Patmos, and governed the Aſiatic churches. There he remained till the time of Trajan. At the requeſt of the biſhops, he went to the neighbouring churches, partly to ordain paſtors, and partly to regulate the congregations. At one place in his tour obſerving a youth of a remarkably intereſting countenance, he warmly recommended him to the care of a particular paſtor. The young man was baptized;

* Præſcript. Hær.

tized; and, for a time, lived as a Chriſtian. But being gradually corrupted by company, he became idle and intemperate; and at length ſo diſhoneſt, as to become a captain of a band of robbers. Some time after John had occaſion to inquire of the paſtor concerning the young man, who told him, that he was now dead to God; and that he inhabited a mountain over againſt his church*. John, in the vehemence of his charity, went to the place, and expoſed himſelf to be taken by the robbers. "Bring me, ſays he, to your captain." The young robber beheld him coming; and as ſoon as he knew the aged and venerable Apoſtle, he was ſtruck with ſhame and fled.—St. John followed him and cried, My ſon, why flyeſt thou from thy father, unarmed and old? Fear not; as yet there remaineth hope of ſalvation. Believe me, Chriſt hath ſent me. Hearing this, the young man ſtood ſtill, trembled, and wept bitterly. John prayed, exhorted, and brought him back to the ſociety of Chriſtians; nor did he leave him, till he judged him fully reſtored by divine Grace.

Even the truth of this laſt relation has been queſtioned by Baſnage. But as I know no reaſon for heſitation, I ſhall leave it with the ſerious reader, who loves to behold the tokens of Grace from age to age diſpenſed to ſinners.

We have yet another ſtory of St. John, ſhort, but pleaſing, and which has had the good fortune to paſs uncontradicted. Being now very old, and unable to ſay much in Chriſtian aſſembles, "Children, love one another," was his conſtantly-repeated ſermon. Being aſked why he told them only one thing, he anſwered, that "nothing elſe was needed." This account reſts on the ſingle teſtimony of Jerom, ſo far as I have found. But as

* Clem. Alex. apud Euſeb.

as it ſeems to fall in with the ſpirit of the age more than the others, its truth is allowed. We may hence obſerve, how little regard is paid to real evidence by many critics, who ſeem to make modern manners the teſt of hiſtorical credibility. Whatever fact ſhews the ſpirit of zeal, the reality of miracles, or the work of the Divine Spirit on the heart, muſt be queſtioned: What indicates feeling or humanity, this alone muſt be allowed to ſtand its ground. In truth, I ſhould be ſorry to have ſo beautiful a ſtory called in queſtion; but its evidences are by no means ſuperior to thoſe of the three former.

John lived three or four years after his return to Aſia, having been preſerved to the age of a hundred years, for the benefit of the Church of Chriſt, an ineſtimable pattern of charity and goodneſs.

Of the Apoſtle Barnabas nothing is known, except what is recorded in the Acts. There we have an honourable encomium of his character, and a particular deſcription of his joint labours with St. Paul. It is a great injury to him, to apprehend the epiſtle, which goes by his name, to be his.

The work of Hermas, though truly pious and probably written by the perſon mentioned in the epiſtle to the Romans, is yet a compoſition of inferior merit; nor is it worth while to detain the reader concerning it. Indeed we have no eccleſiaſtical work, excluſive of the Scriptures, except one, which does any peculiar honour to the firſt century. To believe, to ſuffer, to love,—not to write, was the primitive taſte.

The work which I except is Clement's Epiſtle to the Corinthians. This is he, whom Paul calls his fellow-labourer, whoſe "name is in the book of

of life*." He long ſurvived Paul and Peter, and was no doubt a bleſſing to the Roman Church, over which he preſided nine years. His epiſtle was read in many primitive churches, and was admired exceedingly by the antients. It has a ſimplicity and a plainneſs, not eaſily reliſhed by a ſyſtematic modern; but there belongs to it, alſo, a wonderful depth of holineſs and wiſdom. A few quotations relating to its hiſtory, its doctrine, and its ſpirit, will not improperly cloſe this account of the paſtors of the firſt century.

Its hiſtory will bring again to our view the Church of Corinth, which we have already ſeen diſtracted with ſchiſms and contentions, and more diſgracing its high calling with ſecular ambition than any other primitive Church. From the teſtimony of Clement it appears, that St. Paul's two epiſtles had been abundantly uſeful; and that he had reaſon to rejoice in the confidence which he repoſed in the ſincerity of profeſſion, which prevailed in many of them, notwithſtanding theſe evils. The account which he gives of their good ſituation, may juſtly be conſidered as the proper fruit of apoſtolical admonitions.—"What ſtrangers, that came among you, did not take honourable notice formerly of the firmneſs and fulneſs of your faith? Who of them did not admire the ſobriety and gentleneſs of your godly ſpirit in Chriſt? Who did not extol the liberal practice of your Chriſtian hoſpitality? How admirable was your ſound and mature knowledge of divine things? Ye were wont to do all things without reſpect to perſons; and ye walked in the ways of God in due ſubjection to your paſtors, and ſubmitting yourſelves the younger to the elder. Ye charged young men to attend to the gravity and moderation

* Philip. iv.

moderation becoming the Chriſtian character; young women to diſcharge their duties with a blameleſs, holy, and chaſte conſcientiouſneſs; to love their huſbands with all ſuitable tenderneſs and fidelity; and to guide the houſe in all ſoberneſs and gravity. Then ye all ſhewed a humble ſpirit, void of boaſting and arrogance, more ready to obey than to command, more ready to give than to receive. Content with the divine allotments, and attending diligently to his word, ye were enlarged in your bowels of love; and his ſufferings on the croſs were before your eyes. Hence a profound and happy peace was imparted to you all: an unwearied deſire of doing good, and a plentiful effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt was with you. Full of holy counſel, in all readineſs of mind, with godly aſſurance of faith, ye ſtretched forth your hands to the Lord Almighty, intreating him to be gracious to you, if in any thing ye unwillingly offended. Your care was, day and night, for all the brethren; that the number of his elect might be ſaved in mercy and a good conſcience. Ye were indeed ſincere and harmleſs, and forgiving one another. All diſſenſion and ſchiſm in the Church was abominable to you: ye mourned over the faults of your neighbours; ye ſympathized with their infirmities as your own: ye were unwearied in all goodneſs, and ready to every good work. Adorned with a venerable and upright converſation, ye performed all things in his fear; and the law of God was written deep indeed on the tables of your hearts."

It is pleaſing to ſee this numerous Church, of whom our Saviour had ſo long ago declared that "he had much people in this city," toward the cloſe of the century, ſtill alive in the faith, hope, and charity of the Goſpel, free in a great degree from

from the evils, which had coſt St. Paul ſo much care and grief, and preſerving the vigour of true Chriſtianity. But hiſtory muſt be faithful: and their decline is deſcribed in the ſame epiſtle. Pride and a ſchiſmatical ſpirit, which have ſince tarniſhed ſo many churches, and which were evils particularly Corinthian, defaced this agreeable picture. But let Clement ſpeak for himſelf:

"Thus when all glory and enlargement were given to you, that Scripture was fulfilled, "Jeſhurun waxed fat and kicked." Hence envy, ſtrife, diſſenſion, perſecution, diſorder, war, and deſolation have ſeized your church. "The child has behaved himſelf proudly againſt the antient, and the baſe againſt the honourable, the mean againſt the eminent, and the fooliſh againſt the wiſe." Hence righteouſneſs and peace are far from you; becauſe ye all leave the fear of God; and your ſpiritual ſight is become too dim to be guided by the faith of the Goſpel. Ye walk not in his ordinances, nor walk worthy of the Lord Chriſt; but ye all walk too much according to your own evil luſts, nouriſhing and cheriſhing a malignant ſpirit of envy, by which the firſt death came into the world."

The ſchiſm pregnant with ſo many evils gave occaſion to this epiſtle. It ſeems the diſtracted Corinthians aſked counſel of the Church of Rome; and her venerable paſtor wrote this epiſtle in conſequence of their requeſt. He apologizes, indeed, for the delay of writing, which he imputes to the afflictions and diſtreſſes which befel the Chriſtians of Rome, moſt probably on account of Domitian's perſecution, the letter itſelf being written about the year 94. In theſe times the ſin of ſchiſm was looked on with the greateſt horror. Clement calls the promoters of it "the haughty diſorderly A. D. 94.

leaders

leaders of the abominable ſchiſm."—It is no trifling guilt, which men incur, by precipitately giving up themſelves to the will of thoſe, whoſe aim is ſtrife and the advancement of a ſect or party, not the intereſt of godlineſs. He ſpeaks of perſons, who talk of peace with their lips, while their conduct ſhews, that they love to break the unity of the Church; like the hypocrite, who draws nigh to "the Lord with his lips, while his heart is far from him."

The attentive reader cannot but obſerve, how the ſame evil prevails in our days to the great injury of real piety; and yet how little it is deplored; rather, how much encouraged and promoted by ſpecious repreſentations of liberty, of the right of private judgment, of a juſt contempt of implicit faith, and of pleas of conſcience. Doubtleſs, from theſe topics there are deducible arguments of great moment, and which deſerve the moſt ſerious attention in practical concerns: but, at preſent, it is not my province to explain the middle path in this ſubject, nor to prove that modern evangelical Churches are far gone into the vicious extreme of ſchiſm.

Vera rerum VOCABULA *amiſimus.*

However ſome perſons may triumph in effecting ſeparations from FAITHFUL paſtors, it is a ſhameful and an unchriſtian practice: and perhaps humble ſpirits may, from Clement himſelf, acquire ſufficient inſtruction, how to diſcriminate the ſpirit of conſcientious zeal from that of ſchiſm, and to know when they ought not to ſeparate from the Church to which they belong. "The Apoſtles, ſays he, with the greateſt care ordained the rulers of the Church, and delivered a rule of ſucceſſion in future, that after their deceaſe other approved men might

might ſucceed. Thoſe then who, by them, or in ſucceſſion by other choice, were ordained rulers with the approbation and concurrence of the whole Church; and who in a blameleſs conduct have miniſtered to the flock of Chriſt in humility; who for a ſeries of years have been well reported of by all men, theſe we think it unrighteous to deprive of the miniſtry. Nor is it a ſin of ſmall magnitude, to eject from the ſacred office men whoſe miniſtry hath been thus blameleſs and holy. Happy thoſe preſbyters, who have finiſhed their courſe, and have departed in peace and in the fruitful diſcharge of their duties! They at leaſt, remote from envy and faction, are not ſubject to popular caprice, nor expoſed to the danger of out-living the affections of their flock, and their own unfruitfulneſs. We ſee with grief, brethren, that ye have deprived of the miniſtry ſome of your godly paſtors, whoſe labours for your ſouls deſerved a different treatment." And he goes on to ſhew, that godly men in Scripture, "were indeed perſecuted, but by the wicked; were impriſoned, but by the unholy; were ſtoned, but by the enemies of God; were murdered, but by the profane. Was Daniel caſt into the den of lions by men who feared God? Were Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego caſt into the midſt of the burning fiery furnace by men, who worſhipped the Moſt High?"

What the ſin of ſchiſm is,—in what manner the Corinthians were guilty of it,—and how far all this is applicable to the caſe of Churches at this day, will need but little comment. He afterwards reminds them of their former guilt in St. Paul's time. "Do take up the writings of the bleſſed Apoſtle; what did he ſay to you in the beginning of the Goſpel? Truly, by Divine Inſpiration, he gave you directions concerning himſelf, and Cephas,

and Apollos, becauſe even then ye were ſplitting into parties. But your party-ſpirit at that time had leſs evil in it, becauſe it was exerciſed towards Apoſtles of eminent holineſs, and towards one much approved of by them. But now conſider who they are that have ſubverted you, and broken the bonds of brotherly love. Theſe are ſhameful things, brethren, very ſhameful! Oh tell it not on Chriſtian ground, that the antient and flouriſhing Church of Corinth have quarrelled with their paſtors, from a weak partiality for one or two perſons. This rumour hath not only reached us Chriſtians, but is ſpread among infidels; ſo that the name of God is blaſphemed through your folly; and your own ſpiritual health is endangered indeed." After exhorting them with much pathos to heal the breaches, he, toward the cloſe, beſeeches them—" to ſend back our meſſengers ſhortly in peace with joy, that they may quickly bring us the news of your concord, which we ſo ardently long for; that we may ſpeedily rejoice on your account."—What effect on the Corinthians this kind animadverſion produced we know not: The whole hiſtory of the ſchiſm certainly deſerved to be noticed: It is related by the faithful pen of Clement; and the ſpirit of declenſion from ſimple Chriſtianity, and the way by which the Spirit of God is commonly provoked to depart from churches once flouriſhing in holineſs, are well deſcribed. Human nature appears to have been always the ſame: And this example affords a ſtanding admonition to Chriſtian churches to beware of that nice, factious, and licentious ſpirit, which, under pretence of ſuperior diſcernment and regard for liberty of conſcience, has often broken the bonds of peace, and ſometimes ſubjected the beſt of paſtors to ſuffer, from a people profeſſing godlineſs, what might have been expected only from perſons altogether impious and profane.

No

No apology, I truſt, can be neceſſary for laying before the reader, from the ſame excellent author, the following occaſional exhortation. "Set before your eyes the holy Apoſtles.—Through the enmity of the human heart Peter underwent a variety of afflictions; and having ſuffered martyrdom, departed to the due place of glory. Through the hatred of a wicked world Paul having been ſcourged, ſtoned, and ſeven times caſt into priſon, obtained at length the reward of his patience: Having preached the Goſpel in the eaſt and weſt, he obtained a good report through faith: Having preached righteouſneſs to the utmoſt bounds of the weſt, and having ſuffered martyrdom from princes, he left this world, and reached the ſhore of a bleſſed immortality:—He was an eminent pattern of thoſe, who ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake. By the godly converſation and labours of theſe men, a great multitude of the elect was gathered together; who, through ſimilar hatred of the world, were afflicted with cruel torments and obtained a ſimilar good report through faith among us. Through the operation of the ſame evil principle, even women among us have ſuſtained the moſt cruel and unrighteous ſufferings, and finiſhed in patient faith their courſe, and received, notwithſtanding the weakneſs of their ſex, the prize of Chriſtian heroes."

The nature of the epiſtle being practical, and thoſe to whom it was written not being corrupted in their ſentiments, much of doctrine by accurate expoſition and enforcement is not to be expected. Yet the fundamentals of godlineſs are very manifeſt: Salvation ONLY by the blood of Chriſt, the neceſſity of repentance in all men,—becauſe all men are guilty before God,—THESE GREAT TRUTHS he ſuppoſes, and builds on continually. "Let us ſtedfaſtly behold the blood of Chriſt, and ſee how

precious it is in the ſight of God, which being ſhed for our ſalvation, hath procured the Grace of Repentance for all the world."

And the nature and neceſſity of lively faith, as a principle of all true goodneſs and happineſs, and perfectly diſtinct from the dead hiſtorical aſſent, with which it is by many ſo unhappily confounded, is well illuſtrated in the caſe of Lot's wife. "She had another ſpirit, another heart: hence, ſhe was made a monument of the Lord's indignation, a pillar of ſalt to this day; that all the earth in all generations may know, that the double-minded, who ſtagger at the promiſes of God and diſtruſt the power of grace in unbelief, ſhall obtain nothing of the Lord, but the ſignal diſplay of his vengeance."

The divine dignity and glory of our Saviour, is well deſcribed in theſe words. "Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Sceptre of the Majeſty of God, came not in the pomp of arrogance or pride, though who can underſtand the thunder of his power?—But he was meek and lowly."—

The doctrine of election runs remarkably through the epiſtle, in connection with holineſs, as the Scripture always ſtates it. A paſſage may properly be introduced here, to ſhew that it was a primitive doctrine, and made uſe of for the promotion of a holy life. "Let us go to him in ſanctification of heart, lifting up holy hands to him, influenced by the love of our gracious and compaſſionate Father, who hath made us by his election his peculiar people. Since therefore we are the elect of God, holy and beloved, let us work the works of holineſs."

The diſtinguiſhing doctrine of Chriſtianity, without which indeed the Goſpel is a mere name, and incapable of conſoling ſinners, is doubtleſs juſtification

cation by the Grace of Chriſt through faith alone. See the following teſtimony to it in this author. It deſerves to be diſtinctly remembered, as an unequivocal proof of the faith of the primitive Church.

"All theſe,—he is ſpeaking of the Old Teſtament fathers,—were magnified and honoured, not through themſelves, not through their own works, not through the righteous deeds which they performed, but through HIS WILL. And we alſo by his will being called in Chriſt Jeſus, are JUSTIFIED not by ourſelves, nor, by our own wiſdom, or underſtanding, or godlineſs, or by the works which we have wrought in holineſs of heart, but by FAITH;—by which the Almighty hath juſtified all, who are or have been juſtified from the beginning."

His quick perception of the common objection,—what need then of good works? His ready anſwer to it, and his manner of ſtating the NECESSITY of good works, and of placing them on their proper baſis, ſhew how deeply he had ſtudied, and how exquiſitely he reliſhed and felt St. Paul's doctrines.—"But what then? Shall we neglect good works? Does it hence follow, that we ſhould leave the law of loving obedience? God forbid;—let us rather haſten with all earneſtneſs of mind to every good work; for the Lord himſelf rejoices in his works. Having ſuch a pattern, how ſtrenuouſly ſhould we follow his will, and work the works of righteouſneſs with all our might."

The doctrine of the Spirit's work on the heart, and of the experience of his conſolations in the ſoul, which, in our days, is ſo generally charged with enthuſiaſm, appears from the following paſſage:

"How bleſſed, how amazing the gifts of God; beloved! Life in immortality,—ſplendor in right-

eouſneſs,—truth in liberty,—faith in aſſurance,—ſobriety in holineſs!—And thus far in this life we know experimentally. If the earneſts of the Spirit be ſo precious, what muſt be the things which God hereafter hath prepared for them that wait for him?"

I forbear to produce his views of the reſurrection, and his beautiful manner of ſupporting the doctrine by the analogy of nature, after the manner of St. Paul. His miſtake in applying the ſtory of the Arabian Phœnix has been, I think, too ſeverely cenſured. None in truth ought to cenſure it as a blemiſh, except thoſe who can ſo much compliment their own ſagacity, as to ſay, that they in like circumſtances would not have done the ſame. If the fact had been true, it doubtleſs would have afforded a happy illuſtration of the doctrine of a reſurrection. The ſtory was generally believed in his days. That Clement believed it, is no proof of weakneſs of judgment: and nobody contends, that his epiſtle, in the proper and ſtrict ſenſe, is written by inſpiration.

What men are by nature,—how dark and miſerable;—what they become by converting grace in the renewal of the underſtanding, is thus expreſſed: "Through him, that is, through Jeſus Chriſt, let us behold the glory of God ſhining in his face: Through him the eyes of our hearts were opened: Through him our underſtanding, dark and fooliſh as it was, riſes again into his marvellous light: Through him the Lord would have us to taſte of immortal knowledge."

This epiſtle ſeems to come as near to apoſtolical ſimplicity, as any thing we have on record: The illuſtration of its ſpirit would ſhew this abundantly. It is difficult to do this by ſingle paſſages: A temper ſo heavenly, meek, holy, charitable, patient, yet

yet fervent, pious, and humble, runs through the whole. The following ſpecimen deſerves the reader's notice.—"Chriſt is their's, who are poor in ſpirit, and lift not up themſelves above the flock; but are content to be low in the Church."—"Let us obey our ſpiritual paſtors, and honour our elders, and let the younger be diſciplined in the fear of God. Let our wives be directed to what is good; to follow chaſtity, modeſty, meekneſs, ſincerity. Let them evidence their power of ſelf-government by their ſilence; and let them ſhew love, not in the ſpirit of a ſect or party, but to all who fear God." Again, "Let not the ſtrong deſpiſe the weak: and let the weak reverence the ſtrong. Let the rich communicate to the poor; and let the poor be thankful to God, for thoſe through whom their wants are ſupplied. Let the wiſe exert his wiſdom, not merely in words, but in good works. Let the humble prove his humility, not by teſtifying of himſelf how humble he is; but by a conduct, that may occaſion others to give teſtimony to him: Let not the chaſte be proud of his chaſtity, knowing that from God he has received the gift of continency." "Have we not all one God, one Chriſt, one Spirit of Grace poured upon us, and one calling in Chriſt? Why do we ſeparate and diſtract the members of Chriſt, and fight againſt our own body, and arrive at ſuch an height of madneſs, as to forget that we are members one of another."

"Is any among you ſtrong in faith, mighty in knowledge, gifted in utterance, judicious in doctrines, and pure in conduct. The more he appears exalted above others, the more need has he to be poor in ſpirit; and to take care, that he look not to his own things; but that he ſtudy to promote the common good of the Church."

"Every one, whoſe heart has any good degree of the fear and love, which is the reſult of our common hope, would rather that he himſelf be expoſed to cenſure than his neighbours; and would rather condemn himſelf, than break that beautiful bond of brotherly love, which is delivered to us."

After preſſing the beautiful example of the charity of Moſes recorded in the book of Exodus *, he ſays, "who of you has any generoſity of ſentiment, or bowels of compaſſion, or fulneſs of love? Let him ſay, if the ſtrife and ſchiſm be on my account: I will depart, wherever you pleaſe, and perform whatever the Church ſhall require. Only let Chriſt's flock live in peace with their ſettled paſtors. Surely the Lord will ſmile on ſuch a character."

III. The reader will not expect that I ſhould ſolicitouſly regiſter the names, and record the opinions and acts of thoſe, who are commonly called heretics.—I have only to view them in one ſingle light, namely, as they deviated from the SPIRIT of the Goſpel. Let us keep in view what that really is. The ſimple faith of Chriſt as the only Saviour of loſt ſinners, and the effectual influences of the Holy Ghoſt in recovering ſouls altogether depraved by ſin,—theſe are the leading ideas.

When the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt firſt took place, theſe things were taught with power; and no ſentiments, which militated againſt them, could be ſupported for a moment. As, through the prevalence of human corruption and the crafts of Satan, the love of the truth was leſſened, hereſies and various abuſes of the Goſpel appeared: and in eſtimating them, we may form ſome idea of the declenſion of true religion toward the end of the century, which doubtleſs was not confined to the Jewiſh

* Ex. xxxii.

Jewiſh Church, but appears, in a meaſure, to have affected the Gentiles alſo.

The epiſtolary part of the New Teſtament affords but too ample proof of corruptions. The Apoſtle Paul guards the Romans againſt falſe teachers, one mark of whoſe character was, "that by good words and fair ſpeeches they deceive the hearts of the ſimple *." Corinth was full of evils of this kind. There falſe apoſtles transformed themſelves into the appearance of real ones. The Jewiſh corruption of ſelf-righteouſneſs, which threatened the deſtruction of the Galatian church, has been diſtinctly conſidered. Many Chriſtians, ſo called, walked as enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end was deſtruction, whoſe god was their belly, whoſe glory was in their ſhame, who minded earthly things †." So Paul tells the Philippians, and with tears of charity.—The epiſtle to the Coloſſians proves, that pretty ſtrong ſymptoms of that amazing maſs of auſterities and ſuperſtitions by which, in after-ages, the purity of the faith was ſo much clouded, and of that ſelf-righteouſneſs which ſuperſeded men's regard to the mediation of Jeſus and the glory of Divine Grace, had begun to diſcover themſelves, even in the Apoſtle's days.

The prophecy of Antichriſt, in the firſt epiſtle of Timothy, chapter the fourth, expreſsly intimates, that its ſpirit had already commenced by the exceſſive valuation of celibacy and abſtinence. Add to this, the corrupt mixtures of vain philoſophy had alſo ſeduced ſome from the faith. Under the gradual increaſe of theſe complicated evils, a meaner religious taſte was formed, in ſeveral churches at leaſt, which could even bear to admire ſuch injudicious writers as Hermas and the Pſeudo-Barnabas ‡. —Peter, and Jude §, have graphically deſcribed certain

* Rom. xvi. † Philip. iii. ‡ 2 Pet. § Jude's Epiſtle.

certain horrible enormities of nominal Chriſtians, little, if at all, inferior to the moſt ſcandalous eruptions of the ſame kind in theſe latter ages. The ſpirit of ſchiſm we have ſeen again breaking out in the Church of Corinth.—But let us obſerve more diſtinctly the HERETICAL opinions of the firſt Century.

Eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, who have paſſed by the moſt glorious ſcenes of real Chriſtianity, have yet with minute accuracy given us the liſts of heretics, ſubtilized by refined ſubdiviſions without end. It ſeems more uſeful to notice them, as they ſtand contra-diſtinguiſhed to that FAITH which was once delivered to the ſaints. Tertullian reduces the heretics of the apoſtolic times to two claſſes, the Docetæ and the Ebionites. Theodoret alſo gives the ſame account of them.

Of the inſtruments of Satan in theſe things, Simon, who had been rebuked by Peter in Samaria, was the moſt remarkable; he was the father of the Gnoſtics or Docetæ, and of a number of heretical opinions and practices of the firſt century. However obſcure the hiſtory of Simon himſelf may be, the leading opinions of the Docetæ are obvious enough. They held, that the Son of God had no proper humanity, and that he died only in appearance on the croſs.—Cerinthus allowed him a real human nature: he conſidered JESUS as a man born of Joſeph and Mary; but ſuppoſed, that CHRIST,—whom yet all the heretics looked on as properly inferior to the ſupreme God,—deſcended from heaven, and united himſelf to the man Jeſus.

The Ebionites were not much different from the Cerinthians: They removed the appearance of myſtery from the ſubject: In general they looked on Jeſus Chriſt as a mere man born of Mary and her huſband, though a man of a moſt excellent character.

character.—Whoever thinks it needful to examine theſe things more nicely, may conſult Irenæus and Euſebius: The account of Ebion in the latter is ſhort, but ſufficiently clear.

It is not to be wondered at, that with ſuch low ideas of the Redeemer's perſon, the Ebionites denied the virtue of his atoning blood; and laboured to eſtabliſh juſtification by the works of the law. Their rejection of the divine authority of St. Paul's epiſtles, and their accuſation of him as an Antinomian, naturally ariſe from their ſyſtem. Tertullian tells us, that this was a Jewiſh ſect: and their obſervance of Jewiſh rites makes his account the more credible.

Theſe two heretical ſchemes, the one oppoſing the humanity of Chriſt, the other annihilating the divinity, were the inventions of men leaning to their own underſtandings, and unwilling to admit the great myſtery of godlineſs,—"God manifeſt in the fleſh." The primitive Chriſtians held, that the Redeemer was both God and man, equally poſſeſſed of the real properties of both natures; and no man, willing to take his creed from the New Teſtament, ever thought otherwiſe; the proofs of both natures in one perſon, Chriſt Jeſus, being abundantly diffuſed through the ſacred books. One ſingle verſe in the ninth chapter to the Romans*, expreſſing both, is ſufficient to confound all the critical powers of heretics: and therefore, on the ſlighteſt grounds, they have been compelled to have recourſe to their uſual method of ſuſpecting the ſoundneſs of the ſacred Text. The only real difficulty in this ſubject is, for man to be brought to believe, on divine authority, that doctrine, the grounds of which he cannot comprehend. Though we have juſt as good reaſon to doubt the union of ſoul

* Verſe 5.

ſoul and body in man, from our equal ignorance of the bond of that union, yet proud men, unacquainted with the internal miſery and depravity of nature, which renders a complete character, like that of Chriſt, ſo divinely ſuitable to our wants, and ſo exactly proper to mediate between God and man, ſoon diſcovered a diſpoſition to oppoſe the doctrine of the Incarnation of Jeſus; and, as there were two ways of doing this,—by taking away either one or the other of the two natures,—we ſee at once the origin of the two ſects before us. The doctrine of the atonement was oppoſed by both;—by the Docetæ in their denial of the real human nature of Jeſus; and by the Ebionites in their denial of the Divine Nature which ſtamps an infinite value on his ſufferings.

Such were the perverſions of the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God. Nor did the doctrine of juſtification by faith only, which St. Paul had ſo ſtrenuouſly ſupported, eſcape a ſimilar treatment. In all ages this doctrine has been either fiercely oppoſed, or baſely abuſed. The epiſtle to the Galatians deſcribes the former treatment: The epiſtle of Jude the latter.—The memoirs of theſe heretics, ſhort and imperfect as they are, inform us of ſome, who profeſſed an extraordinary degree of ſanctity, and affected to be abſtracted altogether from the fleſh, and to live in exceſſive abſtemiouſneſs. We find alſo that there were others, who, as if to ſupport their Chriſtian liberty, lived in ſin with greedineſs, and indulged themſelves in all the gratifications of ſenſuality. Nothing ſhort of a ſpiritual illumination and direction can indeed ſecure the improvement of the grace of the Goſpel to the real intereſts of holineſs. At this day there are perſons, who think

that

that the renunciation of all our own works in point of dependence muſt be the deſtruction of practical religion; and they are thence led to ſeek ſalvation "by the works of the law:" while others, admitting in words the grace of Jeſus Chriſt, encourage themſelve in actual ſin. A truly humbled frame, and a clear inſight into the beauty of holineſs, through the effectual influence of the divine Spirit, will teach men to live a ſanctified life by the faith of Jeſus. The Gentile converts by the Gnoſtic hereſy, and the Jewiſh by that of Ebion, were conſiderably corrupted toward the cloſe of the century. The latter indeed of theſe hereſies had been gradually making progreſs for ſome time. We have ſeen, that the object of the firſt council of Jeruſalem was to guard men againſt the impoſition of Moſaic obſervances, and to teach them to rely on the grace of Chriſt alone for ſalvation. But ſelf-righteouſneſs is a weed of too quick a growth to be eaſily eradicated. The Phariſaic Chriſtans, we may apprehend, were not immediately advanced to the full ſize of hereſy. But when they proceeded to reject St. Paul's writings, we may fairly conclude, that they fully rejected the article of juſtification.—A ſeparation was made; and the Ebionites, as a diſtinct body of men, deſerved the name of heretics.

St. Paul indeed, who, with an eagle's eye, had explored the growing evil, was now no more in the world. But the HEAD of the Church prolonged the life of his favourite John to the extreme age of a hundred: and his authority checked the progreſs of heretical pravity. He reſided much at Epheſus, where Paul had declared, that grievous wolves would make their appearance. Jerom ſays, that he wrote his Goſpel, at the deſire of the biſhops

of

of Aſia, againſt Cerinthus and Ebion. Indeed ſuch expreſſions as theſe, "the paſſover, a feaſt of the Jews,"—and "that ſabbath day was an high day," ſeem to indicate, that the Jewiſh polity was now no more, it not being natural to give ſuch explications of cuſtoms, except to thoſe, who had no opportunity of ocular inſpection. I cannot but think, that Dr. Lardner, who is no friend to the vital doctrines of Chriſtianity, has betrayed, in his attempts to ſhew that St. John in his Goſpel did not intend to oppoſe any particular hereſies, his own predilection for Socinianiſm*. In truth, there are various internal proofs which corroborate the teſtimony of Jerom. The very beginning of his Goſpel is an authoritative declaration of the proper Deity of Jeſus Chriſt: The attentive reader cannot but recollect various diſcourſes to the ſame purport: The confeſſion of Thomas, after his reſurrection, ſtands ſingle in St. John's Goſpel: The particular pains, which he takes, to aſſure us of the real death of his maſter, and of the iſſuing of real blood and water from his wounded ſide, are delivered with an air of one, zealous to obviate the error of the Docetæ: Nor can I underſtand his laying ſo great a ſtreſs on Jeſus Chriſt's coming in the fleſh† in any other manner.

While this Apoſtle lived, the heretics were much diſcountenanced. And it is certain that Gnoſtics and Ebionites were always looked on as perfectly diſtinct from the Chriſtian church. There needs no more evidence to prove this, than their arrangement by Irenæus and Euſebius under heretical parties. Doubtleſs they called themſelves Chriſtians; and ſo did all heretics, for obvious reaſons: and,

* See his ſupplement to the credibility in the hiſtory of St. John.

† 1 John iv.

and, for reaſons equally obvious, all, who are tender of the fundamentals of Chriſt's religion, ſhould not own their right to the appellation. Before we diſmiſs them I would remark,

1. That it does not appear by any evidence which I can find, that theſe men were perſecuted for their religion. Retaining the Chriſtian name; and yet glorifying man's righteouſneſs, wiſdom, and ſtrength, "they ſpake of the world, and the world heard them." The Apoſtle John in ſaying this, had his eye, I believe, on the Docetæ particularly. In our own times perſons of a ſimilar ſtamp would willingly ingratiate themſelves with real Chriſtians; and yet at the ſame time avoid the croſs of Chriſt, and whatever would expoſe them to the enmity of the world. We have the teſtimony of Juſtin Martyr, that Simon was honoured in the Pagan world, even to idolatry *.—What ſtreſs is laid on this circumſtance in the New Teſtament, as an evidence of the characters of men in religious concerns, is well known.

2. If it be made an objection againſt evangelical principles, that numbers, who profeſs them, have run into a variety of abuſes, perverſions, and contentions, we have ſeen enough, even in the firſt century, of the ſame kind of evils to convince us, that ſuch objections militate not againſt divine truth, but might have been made with equal force againſt the apoſtolical age.

3. A ſingular change in one reſpect has taken place in the Chriſtian world. The two heretical parties above deſcribed, were not much unlike the Arians and Socinians at this day. The former have, radically, the ſame ideas as the Docetæ, though it would be unjuſt to accuſe them of the Antinomian abominations which defiled the followers

* Apud. Euſeb. B. 2. E. H.

lowers of Simon: The latter are the very counterpart of the Ebionites. The Trinitarians were then the body of the Church; and ſo much ſuperior was their influence and numbers, that the other two were treated as heretics. At preſent the two parties, who agree in leſſening the dignity of Chriſt, though in an unequal manner, are carrying on a vigorous controverſy againſt one another, while the Trinitarians are deſpiſed by both as unworthy the notice of men of reaſon and letters. Serious and humble minds will, however, inſiſt on the neceſſity of our underſtanding that certain fundamental principles are neceſſary to conſtitute the real Goſpel. The Divinity of Chriſt,—his atonement,—juſtification by faith,—regeneration—theſe they will have obſerved to be the principles of the primitive Church: and, within this incloſure, the whole of that piety which produced ſuch glorious effects has been confined: and it is worthy the attention of learned men to conſider whether the ſame remark may not be made in all ages.

IV. Thus have we ſeen a more aſtoniſhing revolution in the human mind and in human manners, than ever took place in any age, effected without any human power, legal or illegal, and even againſt the united oppoſition of all the powers then in the world: and this too not in countries rude or uncivilized, but in the moſt humanized, the moſt learned, and the moſt poliſhed part of the globe,—within the Roman empire,—no part of which was exempted from a ſenſible ſhare in its effects.—This empire, within the firſt century at leaſt, ſeems to have been the proper limit of Chriſtian conqueſts*.

If

* Indeed that France had any ſhare in the bleſſings of the Goſpel within this century, can only be inferred from the knowledge

If an infidel or ſceptic can produce any thing like this effected by Mahometaniſm or by any other religion of human invention, he may then with ſome plauſibility compare thoſe religions with Chriſtianity: But, as the Goſpel ſtands unrivalled in its manner of ſubduing the minds of men,—the argument for its divinity from its propagation in the world, will remain invincible.

And, ſurely, every diſpaſſionate obſerver muſt confeſs, that the change was from BAD to GOOD. No man will venture to ſay, that the religious and moral principles of Jews and Gentiles, before their converſion to Chriſtianity, were good. The idolatries, abominations, and ferocity of the Gentile world will be allowed to have been not leſs than they are deſcribed in the firſt chapter to the Romans: and the writings of Horace and Juvenal will prove, that the picture is not exaggerated. The extreme wickedneſs of the Jews is graphically delineated by their own hiſtorian, and is neither denied nor doubted by any one. What but the influence of God, and an EFFUSION of his Holy Spirit,—the firſt of the kind ſince the coming of Chriſt, and the meaſure and ſtandard for regulating our views of all ſucceeding ones,—can account for ſuch a change? From the Acts of the Apoſtles and their Epiſtles, I have drawn the greateſt part of the narrative; but the little that has been added from other ſources is not heterogeneous.—Here are thouſands of men turned from the

knowledge we have, that it was introduced into Spain. Whether our own country was evangelized at all in this century, is very doubtful. Nor can we be certain that any miniſters as yet had paſſed into Africa. The aſſertion, therefore, that the Goſpel had ſpread through the Roman empire, muſt be underſtood with a few exceptions, though I think ſcarce any more than thoſe, which have been mentioned.

the practice of every wickedneſs to the practice of every virtue: many, very ſuddenly, or at leaſt in a ſhort ſpace of time, reformed in underſtanding, in inclination, in affection; knowing, loving, and confiding in God; from a ſtate of mere ſelfiſhneſs converted into the pureſt philanthropiſts; living only to pleaſe God and to exerciſe kindneſs toward one another; and all of them, recovering really, what philoſophy only pretended to,—the dominion of reaſon over paſſion; unfeignedly ſubject to their Maker; rejoicing in his favour amidſt the ſevereſt ſufferings; and ſerenely waiting for their diſmiſſion into a land of bliſsful immortality.—That all this muſt be of God is demonſtrative:—but the important inference, which teaches the divine authority of Chriſt, and the wickedneſs and danger of deſpiſing, or even neglecting him, is not always attended to by thoſe who are moſt concerned in it.

But the Chriſtian Church was not yet in poſſeſſion of any external dignity or political importance. No one NATION as yet was Chriſtian, though thouſands of individuals were ſo;—but thoſe chiefly of the middling and lower ranks. The modern improvements of civil ſociety have taught men, however, that theſe are the ſtrength of a nation; and that whatever is praiſe-worthy is far more commonly diffuſed among them, than among the noble and great. In the preſent age then it ſhould be no diſparagement to the character of the firſt Chriſtians, that the Church was chiefly compoſed of perſons too low in life, to be of any weight in the deſpotic ſyſtems of government which then prevailed. We have ſeen one perſon * of uncommon genius and endowments, and two † belonging to the Imperial family, but ſcarce

* Paul. † Clemens and Domitilla.

ſcarce any more, either of rank or learning, connected with Chriſtianity. We ought not then to be ſurprized, that Chriſtians are ſo little noticed by Tacitus and Joſephus: Theſe hiſtorians are only intent on ſublunary and general politics: they give no attention even to the eternal welfare of individuals.—Nor is this itſelf a ſlight exemplification of the genius of that religion, which is deſtined to form men for the next life, and not for this.

In doctrines the primitive Chriſtians agreed: They all worſhipped the one living and true God, who made himſelf known to them in three perſons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt: Each of theſe they were taught to worſhip by the very office of baptiſm performed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt:—And the whole economy of grace ſo conſtantly reminded them of their obligations to the Father who choſe them to ſalvation, to the Saviour who died for them, and to the Comforter who ſupported and ſanctified them, and was ſo cloſely connected with their experience and practice, that they were perpetually incited to worſhip the Divine Three in One. They all concurred in feeling conviction of ſin, of helpleſſneſs, of a ſtate of perdition: in relying on the atoning blood, perfect righteouſneſs, and prevalent interceſſion of Jeſus, as their only hope of heaven. Regeneration by the Holy Ghoſt was their common privilege, and without his conſtant influence they owned themſelves obnoxious only to ſin and vanity. Their community of goods, and their love-feaſts *, though diſcontinued at length, —probably becauſe found impracticable,—demonſtrated their ſuperlative charity and heavenly-mindedneſs.—Yet a gloomy cloud hung over the concluſion of the firſt century.

The

* See Jude's epiſtle.

The firſt impreſſions made by the effuſion of the Spirit are generally the ſtrongeſt and the moſt deciſively diſtinct from the ſpirit of the world. But human depravity, over-born for a time, riſes afreſh, particularly in the next generation. Hence the diſorders of ſchiſm and hereſy. Their tendency is to deſtroy the pure work of God. The firſt Chriſtians, with the pureſt charity to the PERSONS of heretics, gave their ERRORS no quarter; but diſcountenanced them by every reaſonable method.

The heretics, on the contrary, endeavoured to unite themſelves with Chriſtians. If the ſame methods be at this day continued;—if the heretic endeavour to promote his falſe religion by pretended charity, and the Chriſtian ſtand aloof from him, without dreading the charge of bigotry, each act in character, as their predeceſſors did. The heretics by weakening men's attachment to Chriſt, and the ſchiſmatics by promoting a worldly and uncharitable ſpirit, each did conſiderable miſchief; but it was the leſs, becauſe Chriſtians carefully kept themſelves diſtinct from the heretical, and thus ſet limits to the infection.

It has been of unſpeakable detriment to the Chriſtian religion, to conceive that all who profeſs it, are believers of it, properly ſpeaking. Whereas very many are Chriſtians in NAME only, never attending to the NATURE of the Goſpel at all. Not a few glory in ſentiments ſubverſive of its genius and ſpirit. And there are ſtill more who go not ſo far in oppoſition to godlineſs; yet, by making light of the whole work of grace on the heart, they are as plainly void of Chriſtianity. We have ſeen the firſt Chriſtians individually converted: and, as human nature needs the ſame change ſtill, the particular inſtances of converſion deſcribed in the Acts are models for us at this day. National converſions

converſions were then unknown; nor has the term any proper meaning. But when whole countries are ſuppoſed to become Chriſtians merely becauſe they are ſo termed; when converſion of heart is kept out of ſight; and when no ſpiritual fruits are expected to appear in practice;—when ſuch ideas grow faſhionable, oppoſite characters are blended; the form of the Goſpel ſtands, and its power is denied.—But let us not anticipate:—Theſe ſcenes appeared not in the firſt century.

CENTURY II.

CHAP. I.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE REIGN OF TRAJAN.

THE maſter of the Roman world in the beginning of this Century was the renowned Trajan. His predeceſſor Nerva had reſtored the Chriſtian exiles, and granted a full toleration to the Church. Hence the laſt of the Apoſtles had recovered his ſtation at Epheſus, and ſlept in the Lord, before the ſhort interval of tranquillity was cloſed by the perſecuting ſpirit of Trajan. Whatever explication may be given or conjectured of the cauſe of his diſlike of Chriſtians, he had a confirmed prejudice againſt them, and meditated the extinction of the name: nor does it appear that he ever changed his ſentiments, or retracted his edicts againſt them.

There is an account of his perſecution in his correſpondence with Pliny the governor of Bithynia, a man well known in claſſical hiſtory. The two epiſtles between the maſter and the ſervant deſerve to be tranſcribed at length*: they ſeem to have been written in 106 or 107.

A. D. 106.

C. Pliny

* Pliny's Epiſtles, x. 97, 98.

C. Pliny to Trajan Emperor health.

" It is my uſual cuſtom, Sir, to refer all things, of which I harbour any doubts, to you. For who can better direct my judgment in its heſitation, or inſtruct my underſtanding in its ignorance? I never had the fortune to be preſent at any examination of Chriſtians, before I came into this province. I am therefore at a loſs, to determine what is the uſual object either of enquiry or of puniſhment, and to what length either of them is to be carried. It has alſo been with me a queſtion very problematical,—whether any diſtinction ſhould be made between the young and the old, the tender and the robuſt;—whether any room ſhould be given for repentance, or the guilt of Chriſtianity once incurred is not to be expiated by the moſt unequivocal retractation;—whether the name itſelf, abſtracted from any flagitiouſneſs of conduct, or the crimes connected with the name, be the object of puniſhment. In the mean time this has been my method, with reſpect to thoſe, who were brought before me as Chriſtians. I aſked them whether they were Chriſtians: if they pleaded guilty, I interrogated them twice afreſh, with a menace of capital puniſhment. In caſe of obſtinate perſeverance, I ordered them to be executed. For of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that a ſullen and obſtinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the Magiſtrate. Some there were infected with the ſame madneſs, whom, on account of their privilege of citizenſhip, I reſerved to be ſent to Rome, to be referred to your tribunal. In the courſe of this buſineſs, informations pouring in, as is uſual when they are encouraged, more caſes occurred. An anonymous libel was exhibited,

with a catalogue of names of perſons, who yet declared, that they were not Chriſtians then, or ever had been; and they repeated after me an invocation of the gods and of your image, which, for this purpoſe, I had ordered to be brought with the images of the deities: They performed ſacred rites with wine and frankincenſe, and execrated Chriſt,—none of which things I am told a real Chriſtian can ever be compelled to do. On this account I diſmiſſed them. Others, named by an informer, firſt affirmed, and then denied the charge of Chriſtianity; declaring that they had been Chriſtians, but had deſiſted ſome three years ago, others ſtill longer, ſome even twenty years ago. All of them worſhipped your image, and the ſtatues of the gods, and alſo execrated Chriſt. And this was the account which they gave of the nature of the religion they once had profeſſed, whether it deſerves the name of crime or error,—namely—that they were accuſtomed on a ſtated day to meet before day-light, and to repeat among themſelves an hymn to Chriſt as to a god, and to bind themſelves by an oath with an obligation of not committing any wickedneſs;—but on the contrary of abſtaining from thefts, robberies, and adulteries;—alſo of not violating their promiſe, or denying a pledge, after which it was their cuſtom to ſeparate, and to meet again at a promiſcuous harmleſs meal, from which laſt they yet deſiſted, after the publication of my edict, in which, agreeably to your orders, I forbad any ſocieties of that ſort. On which account I judged it the more neceſſary, to enquire, BY TORTURE, from two females, who were ſaid to be deaconneſſes, what is the real truth. But nothing could I collect, except a depraved and exceſſive ſuperſtition. Deferring therefore any farther inveſtigation, I determined to con-

ſult

ſult you. For the number of culprits is ſo great, as to call for ſerious conſultation. Many perſons are informed againſt of every age and of both ſexes; and more ſtill will be in the ſame ſituation. The contagion of the ſuperſtition hath ſpread not only through cities, but even villages and the country. Not that I think it impoſſible to check and to correct it. The ſucceſs of my endeavours hitherto forbids ſuch deſponding thoughts: for the temples, once almoſt deſolate, begin to be frequented, and the ſacred ſolemnities, which had long been intermitted, are now attended afreſh; and the ſacrificial victims are now ſold every where, which once could ſcarce find a purchaſer. Whence I conclude, that many might be reclaimed, were the hope of impunity, on repentance, abſolutely confirmed."

Trajan to Pliny.

"You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the enquiry which you have made concerning Chriſtians. For truly no one general rule can be laid down, which will apply itſelf to all caſes. Theſe people muſt not be ſought after:—If they are brought before you and convicted; let them be capitally puniſhed, yet with this reſtriction, that if any renounce Chriſtianity, and evidence his ſincerity by ſupplicating our gods, however ſuſpected he may be for the paſt, he ſhall obtain pardon for the future on his repentance. But anonymous libels in no caſe ought to be attended to; for the precedent would be of the worſt ſort, and perfectly incongruous to the maxims of my government."

The moral character of Pliny is one of the moſt amiable in all Pagan authority; yet does it appear,

appear, that he joined with his maſter Trajan in his hatred of Chriſtians. In the courſe of this hiſtory many inſtances of the ſame kind will occur. Trajan's character is doubtleſs much inferior to Pliny's;—It is illuſtrious indeed by reaſon of great talents, and great exploits; but, by the teſtimony of Dio, Spartian, and Julian, ſtained with flagrant vices*; and, as is generally confeſſed, tarniſhed by an extravagant ambition. But how is it to be accounted for, that men, who ſeem enamoured with the beauty of virtue, ſhould turn from it with perfect diſguſt, and even perſecute it with rancour, when it appears in the moſt genuine colours? Let thoſe who imagine ſuch men as Pliny to be good and virtuous in the proper ſenſe of the words, try to ſolve this phenomenon on their own principles. On thoſe of the real Goſpel the queſtion is not hard to be determined. Admitting that Pliny might at firſt be prejudiced againſt Chriſtians from miſrepreſentation, how happens it, that he continues ſo after better information, even when he is convinced, that no moral evil is to be found in the Chriſtians of Bithynia, that their meetings are peaceable, and the ends aimed at by them, not only innocent, but laudable? The truth is, virtue, in Pliny's writings, and virtue in St. Paul's, mean not the ſame thing. For humility, the baſis of a Chriſtian's virtue, the pagan has not even a name in his language. The glory of God is the end of virtue in the ſyſtem of one,—his own glory is the end of virtue in the ſyſtem of the other. The Chriſtians of Bithynia would be able to give the ſevere inquiſitor "a reaſon of the hope that was in them with meekneſs and fear," and then ſuffering according to the will of God, to commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator.

* See Lardner's Collection, v. ii. c. 9.

Creator. Theſe and other precious ſentiments in St. Peter's firſt epiſtle, which was addreſſed to ſome of their fathers, poſſibly to ſome of themſelves then alive, would now be remembered with peculiar force. A vain-glorious mind like Pliny's, elated with conſcious rectitude, would ſcorn to hear of being ſaved by the atoning blood of Jeſus, would not believe the repreſentation of human nature which they would give him, and would prefer his own reaſon before the inſtruction of the Holy Spirit. Had he been, like Cicero, deeply tinged with the academical philoſophy of Greece, like him he would have gloried in ſceptical ambiguity, or have inclined to the atheiſtic views, to which moſt of the old philoſophers were devoted. But as he ſeems to have imitated him, rather in his paſſion for oratorical glory, than in his philoſophical ſpirit, he reſted in the vulgar creed, highly abſurd as it was, and preferred it to the pureſt dictates of Chriſtianity. The former thwarted not his pride and his luſts: the latter required the humiliation of the one, and the mortification of the other.

In all ages, men even of amiable morals, if deſtitute of true holineſs, are enemies of the Goſpel. —We here ſee the true reaſon of this enmity; which is not capable of being abated by argument: for if that had been the caſe, Pliny might have ſeen the iniquity of his proceedings. To call a thing madneſs and depraved ſuperſtition, on the face of which he ſees much good and no evil, is the height of unreaſonableneſs. But it is practiſed by many at this day, who call themſelves Chriſtians, but are really as averſe to the Goſpel as Pliny was: and if we would not be deceived by mere names, but would enter into the ſpirit of things, it would not be difficult to underſtand,

who

who they are that reſemble Pliny, and who they are that reſemble the Chriſtians of Bithynia.

In fact, as there are now, ſo there were then, perſons, who worſhipped Chriſt as their God, who loved one another as brethren united in him: men who derived from his influence ſupport under the ſevereſt preſſures: who were calumniated by others: who were treated as ſilly people, on account of that humble and ſelf-denying ſpirit, by which they kept up communion with their Saviour on earth; and who expected to enjoy him in heaven. —It was not the fault of Trajan and Pliny, that ſuch principles were not exterminated from the earth. They hated the men and their religion.

The difference between the perſecutors and the ſufferers is remarkable with reſpect to the ſpirit of politics. The religion of Trajan was governed by this ſpirit: And his ſervant thinks it needful to force men to follow THE PAGAN religion, whether they believed it to be right or not. Perſecuting edicts appear to have been in force againſt Chriſtians before the correſpondence which we have ſeen; and Nerva's toleration ſeems to have ceaſed. But the Chriſtians ſhewed, that their Maſter's kingdom was not of this world: They were meek and paſſive, as Chriſt himſelf had been, and as Peter had exhorted them to be. Their number was very large in Bithynia, capable ſurely of raiſing a rebellion troubleſome to the ſtate; and they would have done ſo, if their ſpirits had been as turbulent as thoſe of many pretended Chriſtians. "But they were ſubject not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience' ſake." If there had been the leaſt ſuſpicion of a ſeditious ſpirit among them, Pliny muſt have mentioned it; and their diſcontinuance of their feaſts of charity, after they found them

them diſagreeable to government, is a proof of their loyal and peaceable temper.

In Aſia, Arrius Antoninus perſecuted them with extreme fury. I am not certain whether his perſecution belongs to the reign of Trajan; but as there was an Antoninus very intimate with Pliny, the following ſtory of him from Tertullian*, may not improperly, be introduced here.—The whole body of Chriſtians, wearied with conſtant hardſhips, preſented themſelves before his tribunal: He ordered a few of them to execution, and ſaid to the reſt, "Miſerable people, if you chooſe death, you may find precipices and halters enow."—I am willing to believe, that the Chriſtians hoped to diſarm the perſecutor by the ſight of their numbers.

One of the moſt venerable characters at this time was Simeon, biſhop of Jeruſalem, the ſucceſſor of St. James. Jeruſalem indeed was no more, but the Church ſtill exiſted in ſome part of Judea. Some heretics accuſed him, as a Chriſtian, before Atticus the Roman governor. He was then a hundred and twenty years old, and was ſcourged many days. The perſecutor was aſtoniſhed at his hardineſs; but not moved with pity for his ſufferings:—at laſt he ordered him to be crucified†.

It was in the year 107, that Ignatius, biſhop of Antioch, was martyred for the faith of Jeſus. On the death of Euodius, about the year 70, he had been appointed in his room by the Apoſtles who were then alive. He governed the Church during this long period: Nor was it a ſmall indication of the continued grace of God to that city, to have been bleſſed ſo long with ſuch a luminary. We muſt be content with the ſhort character given of his miniſtry in the Acts of Ignatius, A. D. 107.

* Ad Scapul. C. ult. † Euſeb. B. iii c. 29.

natius, a piece of martyrology firſt publiſhed in 1647 by archbiſhop Uſher, from two old manuſcripts which have ſtronger marks of credibility than is uſual with ſuch compoſitions.

" He was a man in all things like to the Apoſtles: as a good governor, by the helm of prayer and faſting, by the conſtancy of his doctrine and ſpiritual labour, he oppoſed himſelf to the floods of the adverſary: he was like a divine lamp illuminating the hearts of the faithful by his expoſition of the Holy Scriptures: and laſtly, to preſerve his Church, he ſcrupled not freely to expoſe himſelf to a bitter death." Theſe Acts were compiled by thoſe who went with him from Antioch, and were eye-witneſſes of his ſufferings *.

Ambition and the luſt of power were not ſtronger features in the character of Cæſar, than the deſire of martyrdom was in that of Ignatius. Divine Providence however preſerved him for the benefit of the Church during the perſecution of Domitian, and reſerved him to the time of Trajan. This prince being come to Antioch about
A. D. the tenth year of his reign, in the year 107, in his
107. way to the Parthian war, Ignatius, fearing for the Chriſtians, and hoping to avert the ſtorm by offering himſelf to ſuffer in their ſtead, came voluntarily into the preſence of Trajan. I ſhall deliver the conference, as it ſtands in the Acts,—a monument of falſe glory ſhrouding itſelf under ſuperſtition and ignorance on the one hand; and of true glory, ſupported by the faith and hope of Jeſus, on the other.

Being introduced into the emperor's preſence, he was thus addreſſed by Trajan†. What an impious ſpirit

* Wake's Epiſtles.

† See the Acts of Ignatius; and the preface of the life of Ignatius prefixed to a Tragedy writen by Mr. Gambold, which repreſents

ſpirit art thou, both to tranſgreſs our commands, and to inveigle others into the ſame folly to their ruin? Ignatius anſwered, Theophorus ought not to be called ſo; foraſmuch as all wicked ſpirits are departed far from the ſervants of God. But if you call me impious becauſe I am hoſtile to evil ſpirits, I own the charge in that reſpect. For I diſſolve all their ſnares, through the inward ſupport of Chriſt the heavenly King. Traj. Pray, who is Theophorus? Ign. He who has Chriſt in his breaſt. Traj. And thinkeſt thou not that gods reſide in us alſo, who fight for us againſt our enemies? Ign. You miſtake in calling the demons of the nations by the name of gods. For there is only ONE God, who made heaven and earth, the ſea, and all that is in them; and ONE Jeſus Chriſt, his only begotten Son whoſe kingdom be my portion! Traj. HIS kingdom do you ſay, who was crucified under Pilate? Ign. HIS, who crucified my ſin with its author; and has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of thoſe who carry him in their heart. Traj. Doſt thou then carry him who was crucified within thee? Ign. I do; for it is written; "I dwell in them, and walk in them." Then Trajan pronounced this ſentence againſt him, "Since Ignatius confeſſes, that he carries within himſelf him that was crucified, we command, that he be carried bound by ſoldiers to Great Rome, there to be thrown to the wild beaſts for the entertainment of the people."

The learned Scaliger was puzzled to conceive what could induce Trajan to order his being ſent ſo long a journey for execution. It might ſeem more natural for him to have directed that he ſhould ſuffer

repreſents the ſpirit of primitive Chriſtianity. The tragedy, conſidered as a compoſition, is unequal; but it contains many beautiful paſſages.

ſuffer in the view of his own flock, in order to deter them from Chriſtianity. But Trajan might think the example much more ſtriking and extenſive, by uſing the method which he took. At any rate, Providence undoubtedly diſplayed, in this way, much more abundantly the honours of the croſs, as will appear by what follows.—The doctrine of Union with Chriſt by faith, now ſo much ridiculed, appears here in its full glory: And if ever we be called to ſcenes like theſe, we ſhall feel the need of it ſtrongly, and be ſenſible of the impotence of thoſe ſchemes of mere human invention, which are often ſubſtituted in its room. Chriſt within can alone ſupport the heart in the hour of ſevere trial: The boaſted moral virtue of proud philoſophers is radically defective and unſound.

The ſcene before us is auguſt; and the ſtate of Chriſtendom at that time is much illuſtrated by it. The ſeven epiſtles of this great man, undoubtedly genuine as they are, and accurately diſtinguiſhed from all corrupt interpolations*, will come in aid to the Acts of his martrydom: By them he being dead, yet ſpeaketh; and what the Goſpel can do for men, who really believe it, and feel the energy of the Spirit of it divine author, has not often been more illuſtriouſly diſplayed.

From Antioch he was hurried by his guards to Seleucia: Sailing thence, after great fatigue he arrived at Smyrna. While the ſhip remained in port, he was allowed the pleaſure of viſiting Polycarp, who was biſhop of the Chriſtians there. They had been fellow-diſciples of St. John; and the holy joy of their interview may be conceived by ſuch perſons as know what the love of Chriſt is, and how it operates in the breaſts of thoſe in whom

* Archbiſhop Uſher has preſerved, or rather reſtored, theſe Epiſtles to us.

whom he dwells. Deputies were ſent from the various churches of Aſia to attend and conſole him, and to receive ſome benefit by his ſpiritual communications. Biſhops, preſbyters, and deacons converſed with him: a general convocation ſeems to have taken place.—Four of Ignatius's ſeven epiſtles were written from Smyrna,—to the Churches of Epheſus, Magneſia, Tralles, and Rome.

The Church of Epheſus appears, from his epiſtle to them, ſtill to have maintained its character of evangelical purity. Their zeal, indeed had decayed, but was revived: and the rage of perſecution was the hot-bed, which reanimated their ſouls, and made them fruitful again in faith, hope, and charity. The very titles, by which he addreſſes them, demonſtrate what their faith was in common with that of the whole Church at that time; and abundantly ſhew the vanity of thoſe, whoſe diſlike of the peculiar truths of Chriſtianity induces them to ſuppoſe, that the ideas of predeſtination, election, and grace, were purely the ſyſtematic inventions of Auguſtin, and unknown to the primitive Chriſtians.—We are certain, that St. Paul's epiſtles, and that particularly addreſſed to this Church, are full of the ſame things.

"Ignatius, who is alſo called Theophorus, to the worthily happy Church in Epheſus of Aſia, bleſſed in the majeſty and fulneſs of God the Father, predeſtinated before the world to be perpetually permanent in glory, immoveable, united, and elect in the genuine ſuffering for the truth *, by the will of the Father, and of Jeſus Chriſt our God, much joy in Jeſus Chriſt, and in his ſpotleſs grace." The character, which he gives of their biſhop Oneſimus, raiſes our idea of him to a great degree. He calls him "inex-

* Alluding, doubtleſs, to the errors of the Docetæ.

"inexpreſſible in charity, whom I beſeech you to love according to Jeſus Chriſt, and all of you to imitate him. Bleſſed be his name, who has counted you worthy to enjoy ſuch a biſhop." With him he honourably mentions alſo ſome preſbyters or deacons of their Church, "Through whom," ſays he, "I have ſeen you all in love." Oneſimus probably was the fugitive ſlave of Philemon, a growing plant in St. Paul's time.

The unaffected charity and humility of Ignatius deſerve our attention. He alone ſeemed unconſcious of his attainments, while the whole Chriſtian world admired him. "I do not, ſays he, dictate to you, as if I were a perſon of any conſequence. For though I am bound for the name of Chriſt, I am not yet perfected in Chriſt Jeſus. For now I begin to be a diſciple, and ſpeak to you as my teachers. For I ought to be ſuſtained by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long ſuffering. But ſince charity will not ſuffer me to be ſilent concerning you, for this reaſon I take upon me to exhort you to run together with me according to the mind of God."

Nothing lies more on his heart in all his epiſtles, than to recommend the moſt perfect union of the members of the Church, and to reprobate ſchiſms and diſſenſions. He repreſents the Chriſtians as all united to Jeſus Chriſt; all partaking of the ſame ſpiritual life. To ſeparate from the Church; and to loſe that ſubordination in which they ſtood to their paſtors, was to tear in pieces the body of Chriſt, and to expoſe themſelves to the ſeductions of thoſe who would draw them from the faith and hope of the Goſpel. In modern times this language is judged not very conſonant to the ſpirit of liberty, on which we are ſo apt to felicitate ourſelves. And I am perſuaded, that the ſtrong manner,

manner, in which ſubmiſſion to the Biſhop is inculcated, has been the moſt weighty argument with ſeveral perſons to encourage themſelves in doubts of the authenticity of theſe pieces. But to doubt the genuineneſs of theſe epiſtles on this account, is to be the ſlaves of prejudice. Uſher, and after him Voſſius, have ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed the genuine from the falſe and the interpolated: and the teſtimony of antiquity, and the agreement of the epiſtles, as thus purified, with the quotations of the antients, render them ſuperior to all exceptions*.

The circumſtances in which the Churches were, ſufficiently juſtify the ſtrong expreſſions of Ignatius. Heretics of various kinds abounded: and their ſpecious artifices were likely to ſeduce the minds of the weak. What then could be ſo juſt a preſervative to them, as to ſtick cloſe to the ſociety of their faithful paſtors, the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles? Humility is the guard of real Chriſtian goodneſs: nothing but the want of it could have tempted them to [illegible] deſire a ſeparation: and in every age the ſame conduct toward godly paſtors is, doubtleſs, the true wiſdom of the Church: The ſpirit of ſchiſm, of ambition, of ſelf-conceit, diſguiſing itſelf under the ſpecious pretences of liberty and of conſcience, has conſtantly produced the moſt fatal effects. Ignatius certainly would not have wiſhed the Epheſians to follow unſound and unfaithful paſtors: but much more caution in judging, and a much greater degree of ſubmiſſion to miniſters confeſſedly upright, are doubtleſs requiſite,

* I ſhall not enter into ſo large a field of criticiſm:—whoever has leiſure and temper ſufficient for the ſubject, may read with advantage Du Pin's ſtatement of the controverſy concerning Ignatius's epiſtles; and may thence, I believe, learn all that is needful to be known concerning it.

quiſite, than many perſons in our days are willing to admit.—" Let no one," ſays Ignatius, " miſtake;—If any man is not within the altar, he is deprived ot the bread of God. If the prayer of one or two has ſo much ſtrength, how much more that of the Biſhop and of the whole Church? He, who ſeparates from it, is proud, and condemns himſelf: For it is written, God reſiſteth the proud. Let us ſtudy therefore obedience to the Biſhop, that we may be ſubject to God. And the more ſilent and gentle any one obſerves the Biſhop to be, the more on that account ſhould he reverence him. Every one, to whom the Maſter commits the ſtewardſhip, ought to be received as the Maſter himſelf."—" Indeed," ſays he, " Oneſimus exceedingly commends your godly order:—and that you live according to truth, and that no hereſy dwells with you"—" Some indeed, with much oſtentation, make ſpecious, but fallacious pretenſions, whoſe works are unworthy of God, whom you ought to avoid as wild beaſts. For they are raging dogs, biting in ſecret, whom you ſhould ſhun, as being perſons very difficult to be cured. One phyſician there is bodily and ſpiritual, begotten and unbegotten, God appearing in fleſh, in immortal true life, both from Mary and from God,—firſt ſuffering,—then impaſſible"—I have known ſome who went from this place*, whom you did not ſuffer to ſow tares among you: you ſtopped your ears; ſo that you would not receive their ſeed, as being ſtones of the temple of your Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, lifted up into heavenly places by the engine of Jeſus Chriſt, which is his croſs, uſing the Holy Spirit as a cord." —" Yet pray earneſtly for other men without ceaſing; for there is hope of converſion in them, that they

* From Smyrna, I ſuppoſe, where the hereſy of the Docetæ was more common.

they alſo may be brought to God. Give them an opportunity to be inſtructed, at leaſt, by your works."—"Without Chriſt think nothing becoming;—in whom I carry about my bonds,—ſpiritual jewels;—in which may I be found at the reſurrection through your prayer, that my lot may be caſt among the Epheſian Chriſtians, who have always harmonized with the Apoſtles in the power of Jeſus Chriſt!"

"Ye are partakers of the myſteries with Paul the holy, the renowned, the bleſſed, whoſe footſteps may I follow!" "Frequent aſſemblies for thankſgiving and prayer: For when you aſſiduouſly attend on theſe things, the powers of Satan are demoliſhed, and his pernicious kingdom is diſſolved by the unanimity of your faith"—"Remember me, as Jeſus Chriſt alſo does you. Pray for the Church in Syria, whence I am led bound to Rome,—the meaneſt of the faithful who are there."

I know not how the reader may conceive: but, to my mind, under all the diſadvantages of a ſtyle bloated with Aſiatic tumour, and ſtill more perhaps of a Text very corrupt, the Ideas contained in theſe paſſages of Ignatius's epiſtle—and indeed the greateſt part of it is little inferior to this ſpecimen,—while they repreſent partly the faith, diſcipline, and ſpirit of the Epheſian Church, and partly the charitable and heavenly mind of the author, give the faireſt pattern of real Chriſtianity alive in its root and in its fruits. We ſee here what Chriſtians once were, and what the doctrines of divine grace are. And that happy union, order, and peace, which flouriſhed ſo long at Epheſus, untainted with hereſy, and ever preſerving the ſimplicity of reliance on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, calls for our commendation of their obedience to their faithful paſtors;—the want of a tender con-

ſcientiouſneſs in which matter, ſo ſoon diſſipates the ſpirit of the Goſpel in many modern Churches, and favours very much the growth of a contrary ſpirit of fickleneſs, turbulence, and ſelf-importance; which, at the ſame time that it feeds the pride of corrupt nature, reduces large ſocieties of Chriſtians into contemptible little parties at variance with one another, and leaves them an eaſy prey to the crafty and deſigning.

The letters of Ignatius add ſomething to the ſtock of hiſtory, as they introduce to our acquaintance the two Aſiatic Churches of Magneſia and Tralles, which elſe had been unknown to us. In truth, that whole fertile region of Aſia propria ſeems to have been more thoroughly evangelized than any other part of the world at that period. From the time of St. Paul's labours at Epheſus, "when all they, which dwelt in Aſia, heard the word of the Lord Jeſus, both Jews and Greeks *," to the martyrdom of Ignatius, — that is for half a century or upwards, — the truth as it is in Jeſus was preſerved in its purity in theſe Churches: The oppoſers of the Goſpel could gain no footing at all in ſome of them: In others they made no great, or at leaſt, no abiding impreſſions: In ſome the fervour of piety was much declined; and in others it ſtill retained a conſiderable ſtrength. A ſtrong ſenſe of the infinite value of Jeſus in his Godhead, his prieſthood, and his blood, prevailed in this region: Faith and love were fed by the view of the Saviour; and patience in ſuffering for his name was one of their moſt common virtues.

Damas, the Biſhop of Magneſia, appears to have been a young perſon, whom Ignatius calls "worthy of God." Eminent grace in perſons of tender years was ſometimes in the primitive Church diſtinguiſhed by being raiſed to the Epiſcopacy. In his letter

* Acts xix. 10.

letter to the Magneſians he warns them not to deſpiſe his youth, but to imitate the holy Preſbyters, who gave place to him, but not to him ſo properly, as to the Father of Jeſus Chriſt.—"Some perſons, indeed, call a man a Biſhop, but do every thing independently of him. Such ſeem to me to have loſt a good conſcience, becauſe their aſſemblies are not regulated with ſtedfaſtneſs and Chriſtian order." He mentions alſo with honour Baſſus and Apollonius as Preſbyters, and Sotio the deacon, "whoſe happineſs," ſays he, "may I partake of! becauſe he is ſubject to the Biſhop, as to the grace of God, and to the preſbytery, as to the law of Jeſus Chriſt."

Here, as elſewhere, he evidently points out three diſtinct ranks in the primitive Church,—the Biſhop, the Preſbyters, and the Deacons. A blind and implicit ſubmiſſion to a hierarchy, however corrupt, worthleſs, and ignorant, was then unknown. But a juſt and regular ſubordination, according to the ranks of men in the Church, was much attended to; and nothing like it, humanly ſpeaking, ſo much encourages and enables godly paſtors to diſcharge their office with zeal and alacrity. Nor is it difficult to conceive, what was the moſt cuſtomary mode of church-government in thoſe times. In vain, I think, will almoſt any modern church whatever ſet up a claim to exact reſemblance. Uſher's model of reduced Epiſcopacy ſeems to come the neareſt to the plan of the primitive Churches. At firſt indeed, or for ſome time, church governors were only of two ranks, Preſbyters and Deacons: At leaſt, this appears to have been the caſe in particular inſtances; as at Philippi * and at Epheſus †: and the term Biſhop was confounded with that of Preſbyter. The Church of Corinth continued long

* Ch. i. Philip. † Acts xx. 17.

long in this ſtate; ſo far as one may judge by Clement's epiſtle; and thence we may in part account for the continuance of their contentious ſpirit. As theſe churches grew numerous, they could never be all aſſembled in one place: the Preſbyters muſt have miniſtered to different congregations, though the Church continued one. Toward the end of the firſt century, all the churches followed the model of the mother-church of Jeruſalem, where one of the Apoſtles was the firſt Biſhop. A ſettled preſidency obtained, and the name of angel was firſt given to the ſupreme ruler, though that of Biſhop ſoon ſucceeded. That this was the caſe in the ſeven churches of Aſia, is certain. The addreſs of the charges to him in the book of the Revelation demonſtrates his ſuperiority. The Deacon, it is well known, was choſen to adminiſter in ſacred employments of an inferior kind. Theſe three ranks appear to have been general in the former part of this century through the Chriſtian world.

It has been an error common to all parties, to treat theſe leſſer matters, as if they were JURE DIVINO, or like the laws of the Medes and Perſians, unalterable. Could it, however, conveniently be done, it may perhaps be true that a reduced Epiſcopacy, in which the Dioceſes are of ſmall extent, as thoſe in the primitive Church undoubtedly were, and in which the Preſident, reſiding in the metropolis, exerciſes a ſuperintendancy over ten or twelve Preſbyters of the ſame city and neighbourhood, would bid the faireſt to promote order, peace, and harmony.

But the Chriſtian world has been more anxious to ſupport different modes of government, than to behave as Chriſtians ought to do in each of them. A ſubject of much greater importance is ſuggeſted

to

to us by a paſſage in the epiſtle to the Magneſians, "As there are two coins, one of God, the other of the world, and each of them is impreſſed with its own character: the unbelievers are of this world, the believers in love have the character of God the Father through Jeſus, into whoſe ſufferings if we are unwilling to die, his life is not in us." Thus does Ignatius call our attention to the grand diſtinction of men into two ſorts before God; of which whoever has felt the force, will be little ſolicitous concerning other diſtinctions.

Let us hear Ignatius's teſtimony to the Deity of Chriſt, and to juſtification by his grace through faith, and to the conſtant influences of the Holy Spirit: And we may obſerve at the ſame time, how the Jewiſh leaven of ſelf-righteouſneſs had not ceaſed, to attempt at leaſt, to darken and to corrupt theſe eſſentials of the Goſpel. The religion of the Jews, indeed, muſt have been at this time in a very low ſtate; yet the ſame Phariſaiſm is ſo congenial to the human mind, that miniſters in all ages will ſee occaſion to warn their people againſt it, as Ignatius did.

"Be not deceived with heterodox opinions, nor old unprofitable fables. For if we ſtill live according to Judaiſm, we confeſs that we have not received Grace. For the Divine Prophets lived according to the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. For this they were perſecuted, being inſpired by his grace, to aſſure the diſobedient, that there is one God, who manifeſted himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt his Son, who is his Eternal Word — If then they have caſt off indeed their old principles, and are come to a new hope in Chriſt, let them no longer obſerve the Jewiſh Sabbath, but live according to the reſurrection of the Lord *, in whoſe reſurrection from the

* Κυριακην ζωην — A manifeſt intimation to them to obſerve the Lord's Day.

the dead our reſurrection alſo is enſured, by him and by his death, which ſome deny;—through whom and by whom we have received the myſtery of believing; and on account of this we endure, that we may be found diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt our only teacher. How can we live without him, whoſe diſciples even the prophets were; for in ſpirit they expected him as their teacher?—Let us not then be inſenſible of his loving-kindneſs: For if he meaſured to us according to what we have done, we ſhould be ruined. Therefore being his diſciples, let us learn to live according to Chriſtianity: He who follows any other name than this, is not of God. Lay aſide then the old bitter leaven, and be transformed into a new leaven, which is Jeſus Chriſt—For Chriſtianity is not converted to Judaiſm, but Judaiſm to Chriſtianity, that every tongue confeſſing God might be gathered together.—Theſe things I warn you, my beloved, not becauſe I have known ſome of you thus ill diſpoſed; but, as the leaſt of you, I am willing to admoniſh you, that ye fall not into the ſnares of vain-glory, but that ye may be well aſſured of that nativity, ſuffering, and reſurrection, during the government of Pontius Pilate, of which literally and really Jeſus Chriſt was the ſubject, who is our hope, from which may none of you be turned aſide!—I know that ye are not puffed up; for ye have Jeſus Chriſt in yourſelves, and the more I praiſe you, the more I know that ye will be lowly minded."—Beautiful view of their genuine humility!

"Study then to be confirmed in the doctrines of the Lord and the Apoſtles, that in all things which ye do, ye may have good ſucceſs in fleſh and ſpirit, in faith and love, in the Son, and the Father, and the Spirit—Knowing that ye are full of God, I have briefly exhorted you. Remember me in your prayers,

prayers, that I may come to God, and to the Church in Syria, of which I am unworthy to be called a Member. For I need your united prayer in God, and your charity, that the Church in Syria may be thought worthy to partake of the dew of heavenly grace through your Church. The Epheſians at Smyrna, whence I write, together with Polycarp, Biſhop of the Smyrneans, and the reſt of the Churches in the honour of Jeſus Chriſt, ſalute you: They live as in the preſence of the glory of God, as ye do alſo, who have refreſhed me in all things: Continue ſtrong in the concord of God: —Poſſeſs a ſpirit of union in Jeſus Chriſt."

From Smyrna he wrote alſo to the Church of Tralles, the Biſhop of which was Polybius, "who ſo rejoiced with me," ſays he, "that I beheld all your multitude in him. Receiving therefore your divine benevolence through him, I ſeemed actually to find you, as I have known you to be, followers of God. For ſince ye are ſubject to the Biſhop as to Jeſus Chriſt, you appear to me to live, not after man, but after Jeſus Chriſt; who died for us, that believing in his death you might eſcape death."

In what follows we have an intimation of the weak and infant ſtate of this Church; which, though ſound, had probably not been ſo long planted as the reſt. And the martyr ſeems to expreſs ſome conſciouſneſs of ſuperior attainments and gifts, but checked with deep humility.

"I have a ſtrong ſavour of God; but I take a juſt meaſure of myſelf, leſt I periſh by boaſting. For now I muſt more abundantly fear, and not attend to thoſe who would inflate me with pride— I love indeed to ſuffer, but do not know whether I am worthy. — I need gentleneſs of ſpirit, by which the prince of this world is ſubdued. Cannot I

write

write to you of heavenly things?—Ye are infants; and I fear leſt I ſhould hurt you:—I fear leſt, through incapacity of receiving ſtronger meat, ye ſhould be injured in your ſpiritual growth."—He goes on to guard them againſt ſchiſms and hereſies, to remind them of the foundation of the Goſpel, Chriſt and him crucified; and, in his uſual manner, to recommend obedience to their paſtors:—He modeſtly thus concludes,—"As yet I am not out of the reach of danger; but the Father is faithful in Jeſus Chriſt, to fulfil my petition and yours, in whom may we be found blameleſs!"

The ſubject of his letter to the Roman Chriſtians was, to intreat them not to uſe any methods for his deliverance.—He had the prize of martyrdom before him, and he was unwilling to be robbed of it.—He ſpeaks with uncommon pathos;

"I fear your charity, leſt it ſhould injure me. It will be eaſy for you to do what you wiſh: But, it will be difficult for me to glorify God, if I ſhould be ſpared through your intreaties.—If you be ſilent in my behalf, I ſhall be made partaker of God; but if you love to retain me in the fleſh, I ſhall again have my courſe to run.—I write to the Churches and ſignify to them all, that I die willingly for God, unleſs you prevent me: I beſeech you, that you ſhew not an unreaſonable benevolence toward me: Suffer me to be the food of beaſts, by which means I ſhall attain to the kingdom of God. Rather encourage the wild beaſts, that they may become my ſepulchre; that nothing of my body may be left; that I may give no trouble to any one, when I fall aſleep.—From Syria to Rome, I fight with wild beaſts—in human form,—by land and ſea, by night and day, chained to ten leopards, who are made even worſe by kind treatment. By their injuries I learn the more to be a

diſciple

diſciple of Jeſus,—yet am I not hereby juſtified. May I enjoy the real wild beaſts, which are prepared for me: May they exerciſe all their fierceneſs upon me! I will encourage them, that they may aſſuredly devour me, and not uſe me as ſome, whom they have feared to touch. But if they will not do it willingly, I will provoke them to it:—Pardon me,—I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a diſciple: nor ſhall any thing move me, of things viſible and inviſible:—Let fire and the croſs, let the companies of wild beaſts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the Devil come upon me; be it ſo, only may I enjoy Jeſus Chriſt! All the ends of the world, and the kingdoms of it will profit me nothing: It is better for me to die for Jeſus Chriſt, than to reign over the ends of the earth: Him I ſeek who died for us: Him I deſire who roſe again for us: He is my gain laid up for me:—Suffer me to imitate the Paſſion of my God. If any of you have Him within you, let him conceive what I feel, and let him ſympathize with me, and know what a conflict I have. The prince of this world wiſhes to corrupt my purpoſe toward God: Let none of you preſent aſſiſt him: My worldly affections are crucified: The fire of God's love burns within me; and cannot be extinguiſhed: It lives: It ſpeaks, and ſays "Come to the Father." I have no delight in the bread that periſheth, nor in the pleaſures of this life: I long for the bread of God; the fleſh of Jeſus Chriſt of the ſeed of David: and I deſire to drink his blood,—incorruptible love."

Certainly no words can expreſs in a ſtronger manner the intenſeneſs of ſpiritual deſire: and one is diſpoſed to look down with contempt and pity

on

on the magnanimity of ſecular heroes and patriots, as compared with it. Yet I have ſome doubt, whether all this flame, ſtrong and ſincere as it unqueſtionably was, had not ſomething mixed with it by no means of ſo pure a kind. For I would not carry the reader's admiration or my own beyond the limits of human imbecility.—Ought not the Roman Chriſtians to have endeavoured to ſave Ignatius's life by all honeſt means?—Has any man a right to hinder others from attempting to ſave the life of the innocent?—or, Will his intreaties give them a right to be as indifferent for his preſervation as he himſelf is?—Ought not every man, however prepared for death, and preferring it, if God pleaſe, to uſe all poſſible methods, conſiſtent with a good conſcience, to preſerve his life?

I cannot anſwer theſe queries to the advantage of Ignatius's determination. Was not his deſire of martyrdom exceſſive? If he was wrong, it was doubtleſs a miſtake of judgment. I fear the example of Ignatius did harm in this reſpect in the Church. Martyrdom was, we know, made too much of in the third Century:—ſo hard is it to be kept from all extremes:—OURS are generally of the oppoſite kind.

Theſe reflections are ſuggeſted, in part, by the example of St. Paul. He, indeed, "would go to Jeruſalem," though he knew he ſhould be bound. But the certainty of death was not before his eyes, and therefore his reſolution, in this caſe, is not ſimilar to that of Ignatius. As for the reſt, he took no pains to diſſuade others from ſaving his life: He took pains to ſave it himſelf: He blames his friends at Rome for deſerting him: And that eagerneſs for martyrdom which Ignatius expreſſes, I ſee neither in Paul nor in any of the Apoſtles. They rather refer themſelves calmly to the will of God

God in things which concern themſelves. On the whole, there appears in Ignatius, the ſame zeal for God and love to Jeſus Chriſt, and the ſame holy contempt of earthly things, which was ſo eminent in the Apoſtles; but, I ſuſpect, not an equal degree of calm reſignation to the Divine Will.

The time which he was allowed to ſpend at Smyrna, in company with his beloved Polycarp and other friends, muſt have been highly agreeable to him. But his keepers were impatient of their long ſtay: the reaſons were, moſt probably, of a maritime nature. The ſeaſon, however, for the publick ſpectacles at Rome was advancing, and, perhaps, they were afraid of not arriving in time. They now ſet ſail for Troas, where, at his arrival, he was refreſhed with the news of the perſecution ceaſing in the Church of Antioch. He had been attended hither by Burrhus, the deacon of Polycarp; and him he diſpatched with an epiſtle to the Philadelphians, by way of return for the viſit which their Biſhop had paid him at Troas. For here alſo ſeveral churches ſent their meſſengers to viſit and to ſalute him: and Providence ſo far reſtrained the inhumanity of his guards, that he was allowed to have intercourſe with them. — He wrote three epiſtles more at this place.

The Philadelphians, from his account, were ſtill favoured with the ſame ſpirit of grace, by which they had been already ſo honourably diſtinguiſhed among the ſeven churches of Aſia. He recommends, as uſual, unity, concord, obedience; — not that he had found any thing amiſs in them, in theſe reſpects.

One may form ſome idea of the manner in which theſe primitive Chriſtians enjoyed the grace of God, and admired and loved it, as it appeared in one another, by his way of ſpeaking of the Phila-

Philadelphian Biſhop, whoſe name is not given to us, "whom, ſays he, I know to have obtained the miniſtry, not by any ſelfiſh or worldly means or motives, for the common good of ſaints; nor through vain-glory; but from the love of God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. I am perfectly charmed with his meekneſs: When ſilent, he exhibits more power than vain ſpeakers."

He recommends to them to preſerve an unity in the adminiſtration of the Lord's Supper: "For there is one body of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and one cup in the unity of his blood; one altar, as alſo one Biſhop, with the Preſbytery and the Deacons my fellow-ſervants.—Whatever ye do, do all according to the will of God."

The firmneſs of Chriſtan faith, and his zeal againſt the ſpirit of ſelf-righteouſneſs, are obſervable in the following paſſage. "If any interpret Judaiſm to you, hear him not. For it is better to hear the Goſpel from a circumciſed perſon, than Judaiſm from an uncircumciſed one. But if both ſpeak not of Jeſus Chriſt, they are to me pillars and ſepulchres of the dead, on which are written only the names of men.—The objects dear to me are Jeſus Chriſt, his croſs, his death, his reſurrection, and the faith which is in him; by which I deſire, through your prayer, to be juſtified." He begs them to ſend a Deacon to Antioch, to congratulate his people on the ceſſation of perſecution. Toward the concluſion he ſpeaks of Philo, the deacon from Cilicia, who miniſtered to him, together with Agathopes a choice ſaint, who renouncing the world, had followed him from Syria.

He wrote alſo from Troas to the Smyrneans, and his commendations of them are conſonant to the character they bear in the book of the Revelation. They had weathered the ſtorm of perſecu-

tion,

tion, which was there predicted, and had probably enjoyed the miniſtry of Polycarp from St. John's time. The moſt ſtriking thing in this epiſtle, is the zeal with which he warns them againſt the Docetæ. In his view the evil of their hereſy conſiſted in taking away the atoning blood of Chriſt, and the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection:—Let modern Divines hear him, and be inſtructed. "I glorify Jeſus Chriſt our God, who hath given you wiſdom. For I underſtand, that you are perfect in the immoveable faith of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who REALLY was of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh and born of a virgin REALLY;—who REALLY ſuffered under Pontius Pilate.—For theſe things he ſuffered for us, that we might be ſaved. And he TRULY ſuffered; as alſo he TRULY raiſed up himſelf: not as ſome infidels ſay that he SEEMED to ſuffer.—I forewarn you of thoſe beaſts, who are in the ſhape of men; whom you ought not only not to receive, but if poſſible not even to meet with. Only you ought to pray for them—if they may be converted,—which is a difficult caſe.—But Jeſus Chriſt, our true life, has the power of this." —A humble and thankful ſenſe of the unſpeakable value of Chriſt, leads naturally to this charity, and the want of it leaves men always, under the appearance of candour, to a cruel inſenſibility of heart and an undiſtinguiſhing ſcepticiſm. It ſeems, that theſe heretics, with the uſual artifices of ſuch perſons, laboured to work themſelves into the good graces of Ignatius. He ſees through their deſigns, and ſays,—"for what does it profit me, if any man commend me, and yet blaſpheme my Lord, denying him to have come in the fleſh?—They ſeparate from the Euchariſt and from prayer, becauſe they confeſs not the Euchariſt to be the body of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who ſuffered for our ſins.

—They who contradict the gift of God, die in their reaſonings."—Union with the Biſhop he ſtrenuouſly inſiſts on. "It is not lawful without the Biſhop, to baptize, or to make a love feaſt."

We ſee the practice of true Chriſtians in thoſe times. They carefully ſeparated themſelves from heretics: they beheld their views with horror: they ſtuck cloſe to Chriſt.—His Godhead, Manhood, Atonement, Prieſthood, were ineſtimably precious in their eyes. They could not allow thoſe to be Chriſtians at all, who denied the fundamentals: In fine, they preſerved order and cloſe connection with their paſtors: they did nothing in religion without them.—Theſe were the means of protecting truth among them: and the long courſe of evangelical proſperity in theſe Churches, under God, may be aſcribed to the uſe of theſe means.

One letter only remains to be mentioned,—that to Polycarp.—It contains a juſt picture of paſtoral integrity, wiſdom, and charity: The whole of it deſerves to be ſtudied by all miniſters. The more holy any Paſtor is, the more will he be ſenſible of the need of divine wiſdom and ſtrength. —The diſadvantages in which a poor ſinful worm is involved, who has to contend againſt the united powers of the world and the devil, amidſt the corrupt workings of his own nature, the open oppoſition of the profane, and the faults of God's own people, cannot even be conceived by a mere ſecular Clergy, intent only on eaſe and preferment, or, at beſt, on literary indulgencies and external decorum: as little will they be conceived by thoſe ambitious and turbulent teachers, who are ſo ſwallowed up in political dreams, as to forget that Chriſt's kingdom is not of this world.

"I exhort thee, by the grace with which thou art clothed, to apply thyſelf to thy courſe of duty; and

and to admoniſh all, that they may all be ſaved. Do juſtice to thy ſtation in all diligence both temporal and ſpiritual: Be ſtudious of that beſt of bleſſings, unity: Bear with all, as alſo the Lord doth with thee: Bear with all in charity, as indeed thou alſo doſt. Find time for prayer without ceaſing: Aſk for more underſtanding than thou haſt at preſent: Watch,—and poſſeſs a ſpirit ever attentive: Speak to each ſeparately, as Almighty God ſhall enable thee to do: Bear with the diſeaſes of all, as a perfect combatant:—The more labour, the more reward. —If thou love only the obedient diſciples, thou evidenceſt no grace: Rather bring into orderly ſubjection the turbulent through meekneſs: Every wound is not cured by the ſame method of application: Watch as a divine wreſtler: Thy theme is immortality and eternal life.—Let not thoſe who ſeem experienced Chriſtians, and are yet unſound in the faith, ſtagger thee: Stand firm as an anvil continually ſtruck. It is the character of a great wreſtler to be mangled,—and yet to conquer:—Be more ſtudious than thou art: Conſider the times; and expect him who is above all time, who is unconnected with time, the Inviſible One made viſible for us,—the impaſſible, but paſſible for us; who bore all ſorts of ſufferings for us.—Let not widows be neglected: Next to the Lord do thou take care of them: Let nothing be done without thy cognizance: Do thou nothing without the mind of God.—Let aſſemblies be more frequently held: Seek out all by name: Deſpiſe not ſlaves of either ſex; yet let them not be puffed up, but ſerve more faithfully to the glory of God, that they may obtain a better liberty from God: Let them not deſire to be ſet at liberty at the charge of the Church, leſt they be found ſlaves of luſt.—If any can remain in chaſtity for the honour of the Lord, let them

do ſo without boaſting. If they boaſt, they are loſt: and if the man ſet himſelf up above the Biſhop, he is loſt. It behoves the married to enter into that connection with the conſent of the Biſhop, that the marriage may be after the will of God, and not to fulfil the luſts of the fleſh."

From Troas Ignatius, being brought to Neapolis, paſſed by Philippi through Macedonia, and that part of Epirus, which is next to Epidamnus. Having found a ſhip in one of the ſea-ports, his conductors ſailed over the Adriatic; and thence, entering into the Tuſcan ſea, and paſſing by ſeveral iſlands and cities, at length they came in view of Puteoli, which being ſhewn to him, he haſtened to go forth, deſirous to tread in the ſteps of the Apoſtle Paul; but a violent wind ariſing would not permit him to accompliſh this deſign. His attendants, the relaters of the martrydom, ſay, that the wind then became favourable for one day and night;—and that they were hurried on contrary to their wiſhes: THEY ſorrowed at the thought of being ſeparated from him: but HE rejoiced in the proſpect of ſoon leaving the world and departing to his Lord, whom he loved:—They ſailed into the Roman port Oſtia; and when the impure ſports were at an end, the ſoldiers began to be offended with his ſlowneſs; but the biſhop joyfully complied with their haſtineſs. Oſtia was ſome miles from Rome; and he was met by the Roman Chriſtians, who intimated their ſtrong deſire for his preſervation. Some of them probably had influence with the great; and they were willing to try it: Ignatius, however, was inflexible. He was brought to Rome, and preſented to the Prefect of the city.

When he was led to execution he was attended by a number of the brethren, and was allowed to join

join in prayer with them. And he prayed to the Son of God * in behalf of the Churches,—that he would put a ſtop to the perſecution, and continue the love of the brethren toward each other. He was then led into the amphitheatre, and ſpeedily thrown to the wild beaſts. He had here alſo his wiſh: The beaſts were his grave: A few bones only were left, which the deacons gathered, carefully preſerved, and afterwards buried at Antioch.

The writers thus conclude. "We have made known to you both the day and the time of his martyrdom,—that being aſſembled together according to that time, we may jointly commemorate the magnanimous martyr of Chriſt, who trode under-foot the devil, and completed the courſe which he had devoutly wiſhed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, by whom and with whom all glory and power be to the Father with the bleſſed Spirit for ever. Amen."

Uſher has preſerved, or rather reſtored to us alſo an epiſtle of Polycarp to the Philippians. It breathes the ſame ſpirit as thoſe of his fellow-diſciple, but has leſs pathos and vigour of ſentiment. Citations from it will be needleſs.—He begs the Philippians to communicate to him what they knew of Ignatius, whom they had ſeen at Philippi, after his departure from Smyrna. We hence ſee how the Churches then formed one large fraternity, abſtracted from partial views of ſupporting little factions and intereſts. He exhorts them to obey the word of righteouſneſs, and to exerciſe all patience, which they had ſeen exemplified in Ignatius, and in others among themſelves, and in Paul himſelf, and the reſt of the Apoſtles: for theſe loved not this preſent world, but

* I uſe the expreſſion of the Acts: let the reader make the obvious inference for himſelf.

but him, who died and was raiſed again by God for us. By his account it appears, that the Philippians ſtill retained the Chriſtian ſpirit.—One of the Preſbyters, Valens, together with his wife, had ſinned through covetouſneſs.—Would to God ſuch ſpots in the paſtoral character were as ſingular in our times! Polycarp beautifully expreſſes his charitable concern for them, and exhorts them, in affectionate ſympathy, to endeavour to reſtore their ſpiritual health.

Theſe facts and obſervations throw ſome light on the perſecution of Trajan, on the ſpirit of Chriſtians ſo far as it can be collected at that time, on the martyrdom of Ignatius, and on the ſignal glory which God was pleaſed to diffuſe around it among the Churches.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE REIGNS OF ADRIAN AND ANTONINUS PIUS.

TRAJAN died in the year 117. The latter part of his reign had been employed in his great military expedition into the Eaſt, whence he lived not to return. His exploits and triumphs fall not within my province:—I have no concern with him except in that line, in which to a Chriſtian he muſt appear to the greateſt diſadvantage; and out of which, it were heartily to be wiſhed, that he had ever given any evidence of a deſire to remove. His ſucceſſor, Adrian, appears not to have iſſued any perſecuting edicts. But the iniquity of his predeceſſor ſurvived; and Adrian's ſilent aquieſcence for a time, gave it ſufficient ſcope to exert itſelf in acts of barbarity. A. D. 117.

In the mean time the Goſpel ſpread more and more. A number of Apoſtolical perſons demonſtrated by their conduct, that the Spirit, which had influenced the Apoſtles, reſted upon them. Filled with divine charity, they diſtributed their ſubſtance to the poor, and travelled into regions, which, as yet, had not heard the ſound of the Goſpel: and having planted the faith, they ordained paſtors, committed to them the culture of the new ground, and then paſſed into other countries. Hence, numbers through grace embraced the doctrine of ſalvation, at the firſt hearing, with much

much alacrity*. It is natural to admire here the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the production of ſo pure and charitable a temper; to contraſt it with the illiberal ſelfiſhneſs too prevalent even among the beſt in our days; and to regret how little is done for the propagation of the Goſpel through the world, by nations whoſe aids of commerce and navigation are ſo much ſuperior to thoſe enjoyed by the antients.—One advantage thoſe Chriſtians poſſeſſed indeed, which we have not: They were all one body, one Church, of one name, and cordially loved one another as Brethren: The attention to fundamentals, to real Chriſtianity was not diſſipated by ſchiſmatic peculiarities, nor was the body of Chriſt rent in pieces by factions: There were indeed many heretics; but real Chriſtians admitted them not into their communities: the line of diſtinction was drawn with ſufficient preciſion; and a diſlike of the perſon or offices of Chriſt, and of the real ſpirit of holineſs, diſcriminated the heretics: and Separation from them, while it was undoubtedly the beſt mark of charity to their ſouls, tended to preſerve the faith and love of true Chriſtians in genuine purity.

Among theſe holy men Quadratus was much diſtinguiſhed. He ſucceeded Publius in the biſhopric of Athens, who had ſuffered martyrdom either in this or in the foregoing reign. He found the flock in a diſperſed and confuſed ſtate†: Their publick aſſemblies were deſerted: their zeal was grown cold and languid: their lives and manners were corrupted; and they ſeemed likely to apoſtatize from Chriſtianity. Quadratus laboured to recover them with much zeal and with equal ſucceſs.

* Euſeb. book iii. chap. xxxiii. † Euſeb. book iv. xxii.

ſucceſs *. Order and diſcipline were reſtored, and with them the holy flame of godlineſs. One of the ſtrongeſt teſtimonies of theſe things, is the account which the famous Origen, in the ſecond book of his treatiſe againſt Celſus, gives of the Athenian Church. While this great man is demonſtrating the admirable efficacy of Chriſtian faith on the minds of men, he exemplifies his poſitions by this very Church of Athens, on account of its good order, conſtancy, meekneſs, and quietneſs:—He repreſents it as infinitely ſuperior in theſe reſpects to the common political aſſembly in that city, which was factious and tumultuary:—He affirms that it was evident, that the worſt parts of the Church were better than the beſt of their popular aſſemblies. This is a very pleaſing teſtimony to the growth of Chriſtianity, ſince the time that a handful of ſeed was ſown there by St. Paul: and let the teſtimony of ſo penetrating and ſagacious an obſerver as Origen be conſidered, as one of the many proofs that might be given of the happy effect which real Chriſtianity has on human ſociety. To a mind not intoxicated with vain ideas of ſecular glory, the Chriſtian part of Athens muſt appear infinitely more happy and more reſpectable, than that commonwealth ever had been in the meridian of it's glory.—But we hope in future pages to give much ſtronger proofs of the advantages derived to ſociety from the Goſpel.

In the ſixth year of his reign, Adrian came to Athens, and was initiated in the Eleuſinian myſteries. This Prince was remarkably fond of Pagan inſtitutions; and by this very circumſtance demonſtrated a ſpirit extremely foreign to Chriſtianity. The perſecutors were proceeding with ſanguinary vigour,

* Cave's life of Quadratus.

vigour, when Quadratus, at length, preſented an apology to the Emperor, in which he defended the Goſpel from the calumnies of it's enemies; and in which he particularly took notice of our Saviour's miracles, his curing of diſeaſes, and raiſing of the dead,—ſome inſtances of which, he ſays, namely, of perſons raiſed from the dead, were alive in his time.

Ariſtides, a Chriſtian writer at that time in Athens, addreſſed himſelf alſo to Adrian in an apology on the ſame ſubject. The good ſenſe of the Emperor at length was rouzed to do juſtice to his innocent ſubjects. The apologies of the two writers may be reaſonably ſuppoſed to have had ſome effect on his mind: Yet a letter from Serenius Granianus, Proconſul of Aſia, may be conceived to have moved him ſtill more. He wrote to the Emperor, "that it ſeemed to him unreaſonable, that the Chriſtians ſhould be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without any crime proved againſt them." This ſeems the firſt inſtance of any Roman Governor daring publickly to ſuggeſt ideas contradictory to Trajan's iniquitous maxims, which inflicted death on Chriſtians AS SUCH, abſtracted from any moral guilt. And it ſeems to me a ſufficient proof, that the ſevere ſufferings of Chriſtians at this period, which appear to have been very remarkable in Aſia, were more owing to the active and ſanguinary ſpirit of perſecution itſelf,—which, from Trajan's example, was become very faſhionable,—than to any explicit regard to his Edicts. We have Adrian's Reſcript addreſſed to Minucius Fundanus, the ſucceſſor of Granianus, whoſe Government ſeems to have been near to its concluſion, when he wrote to the Emperor.

To Minucius Fundanus.

"I have received a letter written to me by the very illuſtrious Serenius Granianus, whom you have ſucceeded. — To me then the affair ſeems by no means fit to be ſlightly paſſed over, that men may not be diſturbed without cauſe, and that Sycophants may not be encouraged in their odious practices. If the people of the province will appear publickly, and make open charges againſt the Chriſtians, ſo as to give them an opportunity of anſwering for themſelves, let them proceed in that manner only, and not by rude demands and mere clamours. For it is much more proper, if any perſon will accuſe them, that YOU ſhould take cognizance of theſe matters. If any then accuſe, and ſhew that they actually break the laws, do you determine according to the nature of the crime. But, by Hercules *, if the charge be a mere calumny, do you eſtimate the enormity of ſuch calumny, and puniſh it as it deſerves."

Notwithſtanding the obſcurity, which I find Dr. Jortin and Dr. Lardner ſuppoſe to be in this reſcript, I cannot but think it clearly ſhews that it was the intention of the Emperor to prevent Chriſtians from being puniſhed AS SUCH. The only reaſon for heſitation, which I can ſee, is the inconſiſtency of it with Trajan's reſcript. But it does not appear that Adrian intended the conduct of his predeceſſor to be the model of his own: and we ſhall ſee, in the next reign, ſtill clearer proofs of the equity of Adrian's views. It is but juſtice due to this Emperor, to free his character from the charge of perſecution; and Chriſtians of that or

* This is an Oath, demonſtrating only the earneſtneſs of the writer in his declarations, according to the uſual profaneneſs of men.

or of any age could not object to the propriety of being puniſhed equally with other men, if they violated the laws of the ſtate. But it is the glory of the times we are now reviewing, that no men were more innocent, peaceable, and well-diſpoſed citizens than the Chriſtians. Yet the enmity of men's minds againſt real godlineſs,—ſo natural in all ages,—laid them under extreme diſadvantages unknown to others, in vindicating themſelves from unjuſt aſperſions: and this forms, indeed, one of the moſt painful croſſes which good men muſt endure in this life. For example, many heretics, who wore the name of Chriſtians, were guilty of the moſt deteſtable enormities: theſe were indiſcriminately charged by the pagans on Chriſtians in general.—This circumſtance, in addition to other ſtill more important reaſons, rendered them careful in preſerving the line of ſeparation diſtinct: and, by the excellency of their doctrine, and the purity of their lives, they were enabled gradually to overcome all uncandid inſinuations.

There is extant alſo a letter of Adrian*, in which he ſpeaks of Chriſtian biſhops in as reſpectable a manner as of the prieſts of Serapis; and of Chriſtians in general as very numerous at Alexandria. Since St. Mark's time therefore, it is evident, though we have ſcarce any particular accounts, that the Goſpel muſt have flouriſhed abundantly in Egypt.

But the ſame equitable rule of government, which forbad Adrian to puniſh the innocent Chriſtians, led him to be very ſevere againſt the guilty Jews: for now appeared Barchochebas, who pretended to be the ſtar propheſied of by Balaam. This miſerable people, who had rejected the true Chriſt, received the impoſtor with open arms; and were

* Vopiſcus, b. 2. 67.

were by him led into horrid crimes; and amongſt the reſt into a cruel treatment of the Chriſtians*. The iſſue of the rebellion was the entire excluſion of the Jews from the city and territory of Jeruſalem. Another city was erected in its ſtead, and called, after the emperor's name, Ælia. This leads us to conſider how the ſtate of the Mother-church of Jeruſalem was affected by this great revolution. The Chriſtian Jews, previous to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by Titus, as it has been obſerved, had retired to Pella, a little town beyond Jordan, inhabited by Gentiles: The unexpected retreat of Ceſtius had given them this opportunity of effecting their eſcape. How long they continued here, is uncertain. They muſt, however, have returned before Adrian's time, who, coming to Jeruſalem 47 years after the devaſtation, found A. D. there a few houſes and a little Church of Chriſ- 47. tians built on mount Sion. Here the Church of Jeruſalem kept their ſolemn aſſemblies, and ſeemed to have acquired a ſplendid acceſſion by the converſion of Aquila, the emperor's kinſman, whom he made governor and overſeer of the new city. But as he continued to purſue his magic and aſtrological ſtudies, he was excluded from the Church.—A ſtrong proof that the Mother-church ſtill retained a meaſure of its priſtine purity and diſcipline!—Corrupt churches are glad to retain perſons of eminence in their communion, however void of the ſpirit of the Goſpel.—Aquila, incenſed, apoſtatized to Judaiſm, and tranſlated the Old Teſtament into Greek†.

Euſebius, b. 4. c. 5. gives us a liſt of the biſhops who ſucceſſively preſided in Jeruſalem. The firſt

* Juſtin Martyr, in his firſt, commonly called ſecond apology, obſerves that Barchochebas cruelly tortured ſuch Chriſtians as refuſed to deny and blaſpheme Jeſus Chriſt.

† Cave's life of Simeon.

firſt was the Apoſtle James, the ſecond Simeon; both whoſe hiſtories have been recorded. He mentions thirteen more; but we have no account of their characters or actions. During all this time ſomething judaical ſeems to have continued in their practice; though Jewiſh ideas would naturally decay by decrees. The revolution under Adrian, at length put a total end to the Jewiſh Church, by the extirpation and baniſhment of this people.—To ſuch outward changes is the Church of Chriſt ſubject: a new Church, however, aroſe in Ælia, of the Gentiles, whoſe biſhop was named Mark.

Adrian, after a reign of twenty-one years, was ſucceeded by Antoninus Pius, who appears to have been, at leaſt in his own perſonal character and intentions, always guiltleſs of Chriſtian blood. It was now very difficult for the enemies of Chriſt to ſupport their perſecuting ſpirit, with any tolerably ſpecious pretenſions: The abominations of heretics, whom ignorance and malice will ever confound with real Chriſtians, furniſhed them with ſome: Probably theſe were much exaggerated: but whatever they were, the whole Chriſtian name was accuſed of them. They were charged with inceſt and the devouring of infants; and thus a handle was afforded for the barbarous treatment of the beſt of mankind; till time detected the ſlanders, and men became at length aſhamed of affecting to believe what was in its own nature improbable, and was ſupported by no evidence. It pleaſed God at this time to endow ſome chriſtians with the power of defending his truth by the manly arms of rational argumentation. Juſtin Martyr preſented his firſt apology to the emperor Antoninus Pius, about the third year of his reign, A. D. 140. He was of that claſs of

A. D. 140.

men

men who, in thoſe days, were uſually called philoſophers. His converſion to Chriſtianity, his views and ſpirit, his labours and ſufferings, will deſerve to be conſidered in a diſtinct chapter. Suffice it here to ſay, that the information and arguments, which his firſt apology contained, were not in vain. Antoninus was a man of ſenſe and humanity. Open to conviction, uncorrupted by the vain and chimerical philoſophy of the times, he was deſirous of doing juſtice to all mankind. Aſia propria was ſtill the ſcene of vital Chriſtianity and of cruel perſecution.—Thence the Chriſtians applied to Antoninus; and complained of the many injuries which they ſuſtained from the people of the country.—Earthquakes, it ſeems, had lately happened; and the pagans were much terrified, and aſcribed them to the vengeance of Heaven againſt the Chriſtians. We have both in Euſebius * and at the end of Juſtin's firſt apology, the edict ſent to the common council of Aſia; every line of which deſerves attention.

The Emperor to the common council of Aſia.

"I am quite of opinion, that the Gods will take care to diſcover ſuch perſons. For it much more concerns them to puniſh thoſe who refuſe to worſhip them than you, if they be able. But you haraſs and vex the Chriſtians, and accuſe them of Atheiſm and other crimes, which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes, which have happened in paſt times, or lately, is it not proper to remind you of your own

* B. 4. xi, xii, xiii.

own deſpondency, when they happen;—and to deſire you to compare your ſpirit with theirs, and obſerve how ſerenely they confide in God? In ſuch ſeaſons you ſeem to be ignorant of the Gods, and to neglect their worſhip: You live in the practical ignorance of the ſupreme God himſelf, and you haraſs and perſecute to death thoſe who do worſhip him. Concerning theſe ſame men ſome others of the provincial governors wrote to our divine father Adrian, to whom he returned anſwer, —"That they ſhould not be moleſted, unleſs they appeared to attempt ſomething againſt the Roman government." Many alſo have ſignified to me concerning theſe men, to whom I have returned an anſwer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any perſon will ſtill perſiſt in accuſing the Chriſtians merely as ſuch,—Let the accuſed be acquitted, though he appear to be a Chriſtian;—and let the accuſer be puniſhed."—Set up at Epheſus in the common aſſembly of Aſia.

Euſebius informs us, that this was no empty edict, but was really put in execution. Nor did this emperor content himſelf with one edict. He wrote to the ſame purport to the Lariſſeans, the Theſſalonians, the Athenians, and all the Greeks.

As this prince reigned 23 years, ſuch vigorous meaſures muſt, after ſome time at leaſt, have had their effect. And we may fairly conclude that during a great part of this reign the Chriſtians were permitted to worſhip God in peace. A few remarks on the conduct of this prince, and on the facts which appear on the face of his edict may be judged not improper.

1. There are, it ſeems, ſome inſtances of princes, even in antient hiſtory, not unacquainted with the juſt principles of religious liberty, which are now more generally underſtood. The moſt intelligent legiſlator,

legiſlator, in any age, never underſtood the natural rights of conſcience better than Antoninus Pius. He ſaw that Chriſtians, as SUCH, ought not to be puniſhed. His ſubjects, bigoted and barbarous, were far from thinking ſo; and it was not till after repeated edicts and menaces, that he forced them to ceaſe from perſecution.

2. In the conduct of this emperor one may obſerve how far human nature can advance in moral virtue by its natural reſources, while it remains deſtitute of the grace of God and the ſuperior principle of holineſs. If the advocates of natural morality conſidered as abſtracted from Chriſtianity, were to fix on a character the moſt able to ſupport the weight of their cauſe, it would be their intereſt to put it into the hands of Antoninus Pius. He would defend it, not with pompous ſyſtems and declamatory flouriſhes, but by an amiable, generous, and magnanimous conduct. I have been aſtoniſhed at the character that is recorded of him. Doubtleſs a more diſtinct and explicit detail of his life would leſſen our admiration. We have not the opportunity of knowing him ſo thoroughly as we do Socrates and Cicero. The former, by the writings of his ſcholars, the latter by his own, are known as minutely as if they were our contemporaries. Could the emperor be as accurately ſcrutinized, poſſibly ſomething of the ſupercilious pride of the Grecian, or of the ridiculous vain glory of the Roman patriot, might appear. They are both allowed to be very eminent patterns of moral virtue; but yet, with all the diſadvantages of ſuch imperfect hiſtorians as Victor and Julius Capitolinus, they muſt concede the palm to Antoninus. Deſpotic power, in his hands, ſeems to have been only an inſtrument of doing good to mankind. His temper was mild and gentle in a very

high degree; yet the vigour of his government was as ſtriking, as if he had been of the moſt keen and irritable diſpoſition. He conſulted the welfare of his ſubjects with great diligence: He attended to all perſons and things with as minute an exactneſs, as if his own private property had been concerned*.—Scarce any fault is aſcribed to him, but that of a temper exceſſively inquiſitive. His ſucceſſor, the ſecond Antoninus, owns, that he was religious without ſuperſtition; and in particular, that he was not ſuperſtitious in the worſhip of the Gods. This we have in his Stoical meditations ſtill extant†. We cannot therefore doubt but that a perſon of this ſtamp would find opportunities of knowing what Chriſtianity was. He certainly did know ſomething of it, and he approved of the moral conduct of Chriſtians. He gives them the moſt honourable character, has no fear of them as diſloyal or turbulent, and makes compariſons between them and Pagans to the advantage of the former. From an expreſſion in the edict,—"if they be able,"—one might be tempted to ſuſpect, that he had very little INTERNAL reſpect for the gods. Were there no God, no Divine Providence, and no future ſtate, the virtue of this man would doubtleſs be as complete, and as conſiſtent as ſo abſurd an hypotheſis will permit:—but his caſe ſhews, that it is poſſible, by the united influence of good ſenſe and good temper, for a man to be extremely beneficent to his fellow-creatures, without due regard to his Maker. Surely—if the holineſs of a truly converted Chriſtian, and the mere moral virtue of a "natural man," were the ſame things,—Antoninus ought to be eſteemed a Chriſtian.—Yet it does not appear that

* Juli. Capitol. Vit. Ant. chap. 7. See Lardner's Collections, chap. xiv.

† Book 6. c. 30.

that he ever ſeriouſly ſtudied the Goſpel.—A ſceptical careleſſneſs and indifference, not unlike that temper, which, under the names of candour and moderation, has now overſpread the face of Europe, appears to have poſſeſſed the mind of this amiable prince: and, while he attended to the temporal advantages of mankind, and felicitated himſelf on his good actions, he ſeemed to forget that he had a ſoul accountable to the Supreme Being; and ſcarce to think it poſſible, that it ſhould have any guilt to anſwer for before HIM. The evil of ſuch a contempt of God is what mankind are of all things leaſt inclined to diſcern: Yet it is the evil of all others the moſt vehemently oppoſed in ſcripture under the ſeveral branches of idolatry, unbelief, ſelf-righteouſneſs, and pride. No wonder;—for, without a knowledge of this evil, and a humble ſenſe of guilt in conſequence, the very nature of the Goſpel itſelf cannot be underſtood. The concluſion reſulting from this conſideration is, that godlineſs is perfectly diſtinct from mere morality: The latter indeed always flouriſhes where godlineſs is; but it is capable of a ſeparate exiſtence.

3. The edict of this good emperor is a ſingularly valuable teſtimony in favour of the Chriſtians of that time. It appears that there were then a race of men devoted to the ſervice of Chriſt, ready to die for his name and for his religion: Theſe men exemplified the ſuperior worth of their religion by a ſuperior probity and innocence of manners, ſo as to appear the beſt of ſubjects in the opinion of an emperor of the higheſt candour, intelligence, and acute obſervation. They were not inferior to the moſt excellent of the heathens in morality: and they poſſeſſed, further,—what this emperor confeſſes their enemies were void of,—a

ſincere ſpirit of reverence for the Supreme Being,—an unaffected contempt of death,—and that to which Stoiciſm pretends,—a real ſerenity of mind under the moſt preſſing dangers;—and all this grounded on an unſhaken confidence in God.—We cannot but hence conclude—that the effuſion of the Spirit of God, which began at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, was ſtill continued. Chriſtians were SO IN POWER, and NOT IN NAME ONLY, by the teſtimony of an heathen prince: and thoſe, who would ſubſtitute the virtue or the morality of fallen man in the place of the religion of Chriſtians, would do well to conſider, that ſound virtue and ſound morality themſelves know no ſupport like that of Chriſtianity.—This divine religion comprehends every poſſible good thing that can be found in all others; and has, over and above, its own PECULIAR virtues:—It poſſeſſes a fund of conſolation and an energy of ſupport under the proſpect of death itſelf; and it points out the only ſafe and ſure road to a bliſsful immortality.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

JUSTIN MARTYR.

THIS great man was born at Neapolis in Samaria, antiently called Sichem. His father was a Gentile,—probably one of the Greeks, belonging to the colony tranſplanted thither: He gave his ſon a philoſophical education.—Juſtin in his youth travelled for the improvement of his underſtanding; and Alexandria afforded him all the entertainment which an inquiſitive mind could derive from the faſhionable ſtudies. The Stoics appeared to him at firſt the maſters of happineſs. He gave himſelf up to one of this ſect, till he found he could learn from him nothing of the nature of God. It is remarkable—as he tells us himſelf *,—that his tutor informed him,—this was a knowledge by no means neceſſary; which fact very much illuſtrates the views of Dr. Warburton concerning theſe antient philoſophers: namely, that they were Atheiſts in reality. He next betook himſelf to a Peripatetic, whoſe anxious deſire of ſettling the price of his inſtructions convinced Juſtin, that truth did not dwell with him. A Pythagorean next engaged his attention, who, requiring of him the previous knowledge of muſic, aſtronomy, and geometry, diſmiſſed him for the preſent, when he underſtood that he was unfurniſhed with thoſe ſciences. In much ſolicitude he applied himſelf

* His dialogue with Trypho, whence the account of his converſion is extracted.

himſelf to a Platonic Philoſopher; and with a more plauſible appearance of ſucceſs from this teacher than from any of the foregoing. He now gave himſelf to retirement. "As I was walking," ſays Juſtin, "near the ſea, I was met by an aged perſon of a venerable appearance, whom I beheld with much attention. We ſoon entered into converſation; and upon my profeſſing a love for private meditation; the venerable old man hinted at the abſurdity of mere ſpeculation abſtracted from practice: This," continues Juſtin, "gave occaſion to me to expreſs my ardent deſire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praiſes of philoſophy. The ſtranger by degrees endeavoured to cure me of my ignorant admiration of Plato and Pythagoras: He pointed out the writings of the Hebrew prophets as much more antient than any of thoſe called philoſophers; and he led me to ſome view of the nature and of the evidences of Chriſtianity:" He added, "Above all things, pray, that the gates of light may be opened to you: for they are not diſcernible, nor to be underſtood by any one, except God and his Chriſt enable a man to underſtand." He ſaid many other things to the ſame effect: He then directed me to follow his advice; and he left me. I ſaw him no more; but—immediately a fire was kindled in my ſoul, and I had a ſtrong affection for the prophets and for thoſe men who are the friends of Chriſt: I weighed within myſelf the arguments of the aged ſtranger; and, in the end, I found the divine Scriptures to be the only ſure philoſophy."—We have no more particulars of the exerciſes of his mind in religion.—His converſion took place, from this beginning, ſometime in the reign of Adrian. But he has ſhewn us enough to make it evident, that CONVERSION was then looked upon as an inward ſpiritual work in the ſoul,—the ſame work of grace which

which the Spirit operates at this day on real Chriſtians. There appear, in his caſe, an earneſt thoughtfulneſs attended with a ſtrong deſire to know God, and alſo an experimental ſenſe of his own ignorance and of the inſufficiency of human reſources: Then there appear further,—the providential care of God in bringing him under the means of Chriſtian inſtruction,—a direction to his ſoul to pray for ſpiritual illumination,—the divine hunger created in his heart,—and, in due time, the ſatisfactory comforts and privileges of real Chriſtianity; which with him was not mere words and declarations; for he ſays, He found Chriſtianity to have a formidable majeſty in it's nature, adapted to terrify thoſe who are in the way of tranſgreſſion, as well as a ſweetneſs, peace, and ſerenity for thoſe who are converſant in it. He owns in another of his works *, that the example of Chriſtians ſuffering death ſo ſerenely for their faith, moved his mind not a little: This is an obvious conſideration and need not be inſiſted on; however worthy it may be the notice of thoſe called Philoſophers in any age.—Juſtin after his converſion ſtill wore the uſual philoſophic garb, which demonſtrates that he retained, perhaps, too great an affection for the ſtudies of his youth †: and if I miſtake not, he always preſerved a very ſtrong tincture of the ſpirit of philoſophy, though not in ſuch a manner as to prevent his ſincere attachment to the Goſpel.

Coming to Rome in the time of Antoninus Pius, he there wrote a confutation of the heretics; particularly of Marcion, the ſon of a biſhop born in Pontus; who, for lewdneſs ‡, was ejected from the Church

* Apology ſecond, though miſnamed the firſt, in all the copies of Juſtin.

† Cave's life of Juſtin.

‡ The truth of this charge againſt his morals has been diſputed, poſſibly with juſtice.

Church and had fled to Rome, where he broached errors of an Antinomian tendency. It makes no part of my plan to define the ſyſtems of heretics; but only to ſpeak of them as they come in my way, with a ſpecial reference to the oppoſition, which they made to the fundamentals of the Goſpel. That holineſs, "without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord," and which it was the great deſign of Chriſt to promote, found in this pretended Chriſtian a cordial enemy. Juſtin, who had taſted of the holy nature of the Goſpel in his own experience, withſtood him both in converſation and by
A. D. his writings. About the year 140, he publiſhed
140. his excellent apology for the Chriſtians, addreſſed to Antoninus Pius, which, with reſpect to the Chriſtians, may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have had a conſiderable influence on the political conduct of that prudent Emperor.

It appears from this performance, that it was common to accuſe Chriſtians merely AS SUCH; and to charge the faults of any perſons, who bore the name, on the whole body.—Thus there is no new thing under the Sun.—The term Chriſtian was matter of obloquy at that time: Various other terms of ſcoff and contempt have been invented ſince; and it requires no great degree of rational power to ſhew, as Juſtin has done completely, the abſurdity and inconcluſiveneſs of ſuch methods of attacking religion, whether they be antient or modern. He takes notice alſo of the happy effects which the conduct of Chriſtians had then on mankind. "We have many inſtances," ſays he, "to ſhew the powerful effects of example among men: Many perſons have been impreſſed in favour of the Goſpel by obſerving the ſobriety and temperance of their neighbours,—or the unparalleled meekneſs of their fellow-travellers under cruel

cruel treatment, or the uncommon integrity and equity of thoſe with whom they tranſacted buſineſs." Theſe are freſh proofs of the continuance of vital religion in the time of Juſtin: — A man calling himſelf a Chriſtian, without any practical power of the religion, would ſcarcely have then been claſſed among the brethren. I find alſo freſh proofs, in this apology, of the ſtrong line of diſtinction kept up in thoſe days between Chriſtians and heretics. The author obſerves that the latter were fond of the name of Chriſtians, and yet were not perſecuted.— There was nothing in their ſpirit and conduct that provoked perſecution.—He takes notice alſo of the ſmall number of Jewiſh converts in compariſon of the main body of the nation. But this, he obſerves, was agreeable to the prophecies of the Old Teſtament. He deſcribes likewiſe the cuſtoms of the primitive Chriſtians in publick worſhip, and in the adminiſtration of the Sacraments, in order to ſhew the falſity of the charges generally urged againſt them.

Not long after his firſt apology, Juſtin left Rome and went to Epheſus, where he had a diſcourſe with Trypho the Jew; — the ſubſtance of which he has given us in a dialogue. In this work he notices the common calumnies againſt Chriſtians, — of their eating men, — of their extinguiſhing the lights, —and of their promiſcuous ſenſuality; but treats theſe charges as not credited by men of ſenſe and candour among their enemies; and therefore as not meriting a ſerious confutation.

On his return to Rome, he had frequent conteſts with Creſcens the Philoſopher, —a man equally remarkable for malignity to Chriſtians, and for the moſt horrid vices. Juſtin now preſented his ſecond apology to M. Antoninus Philoſophus, the ſucceſſor of Pius, and a determined enemy to Chriſtians.

tians. He had conceived hopes of ſoftening his mind toward them, as he had done that of his predeceſſor, — but in vain. Marcus was their enemy during his whole reign; and they ſcarcely ever had an enemy more implacable.—The immediate occaſion of the ſecond apology, as he himſelf informs the Emperor, was this: —

"A certain woman at Rome had, together with her huſband, lived in extreme profligacy and licentiouſneſs. But on her converſion to Chriſtianity, her own conduct being changed, ſhe endeavoured to perſuade her huſband alſo to imitate her example, by repreſenting to him the puniſhment of eternal fire, which in a future ſtate would be inflicted on the diſobedient. But he perſiſting in his wickedneſs, ſhe was induced to wiſh for a ſeparation. By the advice of her friends, ſhe continued, however, to live with him, hoping that in proceſs of time he might be brought to repentance. Upon his coming to Alexandria, he proceeded to greater lengths of wickedneſs, ſo that finding the connection now no longer tolerable, ſhe procured a divorce from him. He, not impreſſed with the happy change which had taken place in her diſpoſitions, and unmoved with her compaſſionate attempts to reſcue him from ruin, accuſed her of being a Chriſtian. Upon which ſhe preſented a petition to YOU, O EMPEROR, that ſhe might have time to diſpoſe and regulate her houſhold affairs: and ſhe promiſed that after that was done, ſhe would anſwer to the charge; — which petition you granted. The huſband, finding his wife to have gained a reſpite from his malice, diverted it to another object, — to one Ptolemy, who had inſtructed her in Chriſtianity, and who had been puniſhed by Urbicius the Prefect of Rome. He perſuaded a centurion, his friend, to impriſon Ptolemy;

Ptolemy; and to aſk him whether he was a Chriſtian. He, no flatterer or diſſembler, ingenuouſly confeſſed, and was a long time puniſhed with impriſonment. At laſt, when he was brought before Urbicius, and was aſked only this queſtion—whether he was a Chriſtian, he confeſſed himſelf a teacher of the Divine Truth. For no true Chriſtian can act otherwiſe.—Urbicius, nevertheleſs, ordered him to be led to execution: Upon this, a Chriſtian, named Lucius, expoſtulated with him on the abſurdity of theſe proceedings,—on the iniquity of putting men to death merely for a name, abſtracted from any one ſpecific charge of guilt;—a conduct unworthy of Emperors ſuch as Pius the laſt, or Philoſophus the preſent *, or of the ſacred Senate. "You too appear to me to be of the ſame ſect," was all that the Prefect deigned to reply. Lucius confeſſed that he was; and was himſelf led alſo to execution; which he bore with triumphant ſerenity; declaring that he was now going from unrighteous governors to God his gracious Father and King. A third perſon was ſentenced alſo to death on the ſame occaſion. And I alſo," continues Juſtin, "expect by perſons of this ſort to be murdered, perhaps by Creſcens the pretended Philoſopher. For the name really belongs not to a Man who, with a view of pleaſing many deceived perſons, publickly accuſes Chriſtians of Atheiſm and impiety, though he himſelf be totally ignorant of their real character. I, Juſtin, have interrogated him, and proved that he is quite unacquainted with the ſubject. I am willing to undergo an examination before you in company with him. And my queſtions and his anſwers will make

* I am aware that the Greek in Juſtin would make it probable that Pius was then reigning; but Euſebius's contrary teſtimony determines me to think otherwiſe.

make it evident to yourſelf, that he knows nothing of our affairs; or, at leaſt, conceals what he does know."

But Marcus was not a man diſpoſed to exerciſe common juſtice towards Chriſtians. The philoſophic garb was no ſhield to Juſtin, even in the eyes of an Emperor, who piqued himſelf on the ſirname of Philoſopher. The ſincerity of his Chriſtian attachments outweighed every argument and every plauſible appearance in his favour. Creſcens procured him impriſonment for the crime of being a Chriſtian, — the greateſt evil of which a human being could be guilty in the eyes of this Emperor. The acts of his martyrdom, which carry more marks of truth than many other martyrologies, give the following account*. "He and ſix of his companions having been apprehended, were brought before Ruſticus the Prefect, — who, I ſuppoſe had ſucceeded Urbicius, —, a perſon of conſiderable eminence, and famous for his attachment to Stoiciſm. He had been tutor to the Emperor, who acknowledges, in the firſt book of his Meditations, his obligations to him on ſeveral accounts, and particularly for his teaching him to be of a placable and forgiving temper. This is one inſtance, among thouſands, that it is poſſible for a man to be ſtrongly impreſſed with many beautiful Ideas of morality; and ſtill to remain an inflexible enemy to the Goſpel. Ruſticus undertook to perſuade Juſtin to obey the Gods, and to comply with the Emperor's edicts. — The Martyr defended the reaſonableneſs of his religion. — Upon which the Governor enquired in what kind of learning and diſcipline he had been educated. He told him, that he had endeavoured to underſtand all kinds of diſcipline, and had tried all methods of learning, but finding ſatisfaction in none of them,

* Cave's life of Juſtin.

them, he at laſt had found reſt in the Chriſtian doctrine, however faſhionable it might be to deſpiſe it. Wretch! replies the indignant Magiſtrate, art thou captivated then by THAT RELIGION? I am, ſays Juſtin; I follow the Chriſtians, and their doctrine is right. "What is their doctrine?" It is this, we believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things viſible and inviſible; and we confeſs our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to be the Son of God; foretold by the prophets of old; and that he is now the Saviour, teacher, and maſter of all thoſe who are duly ſubmiſſive to his inſtructions, and that he will hereafter be the Judge of mankind. — As for myſelf, I am too mean to be able to ſay any thing becoming his infinite Deity: This was the buſineſs of the prophets, who, many ages ago, had foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world. "Where do the Chriſtians uſually aſſemble?" The God of the Chriſtians is not confined to any particular place. "In what place do you inſtruct your ſcholars?" Juſtin mentioned the place in which he dwelt, and told him that there he explained Chriſtianity to all who reſorted to him. The Prefect having ſeverally examined his companions, again addreſſed Juſtin. "Hear thou, who haſt the character of an orator, and imagineſt thyſelf to be in the poſſeſſion of truth. If I ſcourge thee from head to foot, thinkeſt thou that thou ſhalt go to Heaven?" Although I ſuffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true Chriſtians; as I know that the divine grace and favour is laid up for all ſuch, and ſhall be ſo, while the world endures. "Do you think that you ſhall go to Heaven, and receive a reward?" I not only think ſo, but I know it, and have a certainty of it which excludes all doubt. Ruſticus inſiſted that they ſhould all go together, and ſacrifice to the gods. No man whoſe underſtanding is ſound, replies

plies Juſtin, will deſert true religion for the ſake of error and impiety. "Unleſs you comply, you ſhall be tormented without mercy." We deſire nothing more ſincerely than to endure tortures for our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to be ſaved. Hence our happineſs is promoted; and we ſhall have confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which, by the divine appointment, the whole world muſt appear. The reſt aſſented, and ſaid,—"Diſpatch quickly your purpoſe, we are Chriſtians, and cannot ſacrifice to idols." The governor then pronounced ſentence,—"as to thoſe, who refuſe to ſacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be firſt ſcourged, and then beheaded according to the laws." The martyrs rejoiced and bleſſed God, and being led back to priſon, were whipped and afterwards beheaded. Their dead bodies were taken by Chriſtian friends, and decently interred.

Thus ſlept in Jeſus the Chriſtian Philoſopher
A. D. Juſtin, about the year 163, and about the third or
163. fourth year of the reign of Marcus. Like many of the antient fathers he appears to us under the greateſt diſadvantage. Works really his have been loſt; and others have been aſcribed to him; part of which are not his; and the reſt, at leaſt, of ambiguous authority. He is the firſt Chriſtian ſince the Apoſtles' days, who added to an unqueſtionable zeal and love for the Goſpel the character of a man of learning and philoſophy. His early habits were retained; and yet were conſecrated to the ſervice of God. This man, ſurely, ſhould not be ſuſpected of unreaſonable impulſes and fancies. His religion was the effect of ſerious and long deliberation: and the very beſt and moſt important uſe which a Gentleman and a Scholar can make of his rational faculties,—namely,—to determine his choice in religion,—was made by Juſtin. He examined

examined the various philoſophic ſects, not merely for the purpoſe of amuſement or oſtentation, but to find out God; and in God true happineſs: He tried and found them all wanting: He ſought him in the Goſpel: He found him there: He confeſſed him: He gave up every thing for him: He was ſatisfied with his choice; and he died in ſerenity. His perſevering in the profeſſion of philoſophy might probably have another view beſides the gratification of his own taſte: He might hope to conciliate the affections of philoſophers, and allure them to Chriſtianity. The charity of his heart appears indeed to have been great: He prayed for all men: He declined no dangers for the good of ſouls; and he involved himſelf in diſputes with philoſophers for their benefit, to the extreme hazard of himſelf. His houſe was open for the inſtruction of all who conſulted him; though he ſeems to have never aſſumed the eccleſiaſtical character. To draw gentlemen and perſons of liberal education to pay attention to Chriſtianity, appears to have been his chief employment. But he found it eaſier to provoke oppoſition, and to throw away his own life than to perſuade a ſingle philoſopher to become a Chriſtian. The danger of learned pride, the vanity of hoping to diſarm the enmity of the wiſe of this world by the moſt charitable conceſſions, and the incurable prejudice of the great againſt the humble religion of Jeſus, are much illuſtrated by his ſtory. So is the victorious efficacy of Divine Grace, which ſingled out Juſtin from a race of men, of all others the moſt oppoſite to Chriſt. We have ſeen a philoſopher perſecuted to death; informed againſt by one of his brethren; condemned by another, and ſuffering by the authority of an Emperor, who gloried more in the philoſophic than in the Imperial name. A man of his learning and ſagacity ſhould not raſhly be ſuppoſed deſtitute of argument

ment and ſyſtem in his views. Men of ſenſe will ſcarce think the ideas of ſuch a perſon unworthy of their regard.—Let us ſee then briefly what were Juſtin's ſentiments in Religion. We may poſſibly be led to conclude that Chriſtian principles may be ſeriouſly maintained in conſiſtence with the love of ſcience and letters: though perhaps we may obſerve ſome degree of adulteration, which theſe principles received, by paſſing through a channel of all others the moſt unfavourable for the conducting of their courſe,—the channel of philoſophy *.

It is certain that Juſtin worſhipped Chriſt as the true God in the full and proper ſenſe of the words. We have ſeen one teſtimony of it already in his examination before Ruſticus. But let the reader hear his own words. Trypho † the Jew finds fault with the Chriſtians on account of this very ſentiment. "To me it appears," ſays he, "a paradox incapable of any ſound proof, to ſay, that this Chriſt was God before all time; and that then he was made man, and ſuffered: And to aſſert that he was any thing more than a man, and of men, appears not only paradoxical, but fooliſh." "I know," anſwered Juſtin, "that it appears paradoxical; and particularly to thoſe of your nation, who are determined neither to know nor do the will of God, but to follow the inventions of your teachers, as God declares of you. However, if I could not demonſtrate that he exiſted before all time, being God the Son of the Maker of the univerſe, and that he was made man of the Virgin; yet, as this perſonage was ſhewn by every ſort of proof to be the

* It ſcarce need be repeated, that by this term I mean all along that philoſophy of the antients, which was founded in pride, was chiefly ſpeculative and metaphyſical, and at bottom atheiſtical:—no one objects to thoſe moral maxims of the antient philoſophers, which were in many inſtances excellent, though defective in principle.

† Dialogue, P. 63.

the Chriſt of God, be the queſtion as it may reſpecting his Divinity and Humanity, you have no right to deny that he is the Chriſt of God, even if he were only mere man: you could only ſay, that I was miſtaken in my idea of his character. For there are ſome who call themſelves Chriſtians, who confeſs him to be the Chriſt, but ſtill maintain that he is a mere man only, with whom I agree not; neither do moſt of thoſe who bear that name agree with them; becauſe we are commanded by Chriſt himſelf not to obey the precepts of men, but his own injunctions, and thoſe of the holy prophets." "Thoſe," ſays Trypho, "who ſay that he was man alone, and that he was in a particular manner anointed, and made Chriſt, appear to me to ſpeak more rationally than you. For we all expect Chriſt a man, of men; and that Elias will come to anoint him."—The purport of this whole paſſage is plain: The GENERAL body of Chriſtians in the ſecond Century held the proper Deity of Jeſus Chriſt: They believed that this was a part of Old Teſtament revelation: and they looked on a ſmall number, who held his mere humanity, to be men who preferred human teachers to divine. They conſidered the Jews alſo, the moſt implacable enemies of Chriſtianity, as chooſing to be directed rather by human teachers than by the divine oracles; and as inexcuſable in denying the Divine Miſſion of Chriſt, whatever opinion they might have formed of his perſon.—Let the learned reader judge for himſelf, by turning to the paſſage in Juſtin, whether it will not bear the weight which I have laid upon it.—The teſtimony of a man ſo thoughtful, judicious, and honeſt as Juſtin, muſt be deciſive, or nearly ſo;—and therefore muſt, in a great meaſure, determine the queſtion much agitated in our

times, relative to the opinion of the antients, concerning the Perſon of Chriſt.

In another part of the ſame dialogue *, he ſpeaks of Chriſt as the God of Iſrael who was with Moſes; and explains his meaning when he ſaid that true Chriſtians regarded what they were taught by the Prophets. In his firſt apology, he tells the Emperor in WHAT SENSE Chriſtians were Atheiſts: They did not worſhip the gods commonly ſo called, but they † worſhipped and adored the true God, and his Son, and the prophetic Spirit, honouring them in word and in truth. If thoſe, who call themſelves Unitarians, were as candid and impartial as they profeſs, the controverſy concerning the Trinity would be ſoon at an end. — That the primitive Chriſtians worſhipped one God alone, all who eſpouſe the doctrine of the Trinity will allow. Let the Unitarians with equal frankneſs acknowledge that they worſhipped the one God in the three Perſons juſt now mentioned; and then we have the Trinity in Unity. Further — Juſtin uſes two terms uſually expreſſive of that worſhip and adoration, which incommunicably belongs to the Deity ‡. — But, till there be a diſpoſition in men, without diſputation, to humble themſelves before divine Revelation, neither frankneſs in conceſſion, nor unity in ſentiment is to be expected.

The all-important doctrine of Juſtification he ſtates § in the ſame manner as St. Paul does; believing, that to preſs the neceſſity of Moſaic rites on others was to fall from the faith of Chriſt. The learned reader may ſee more at large his views of Regeneration and Forgiveneſs of all paſt ſins through Chriſt Jeſus ||, and how extremely different they were

* P. 56. † P. 137. ‡ Σεβομεθα και Προσκυνυμεν.
§ Dialogue 62. || 1ſt Apology 159, 160, and 68 Dialogue.

were from the nominal Chriſtianity which contents ſo many perſons.

He appears to have had the cleareſt views of that ſpecial illumination, without which no man will underſtand and reliſh real godlineſs. His firſt unknown inſtructor had taught him this; and he ſeems never to have forgotten it. He informs Trypho, — that, for their wickedneſs, God had hidden from the Jews the power of knowing divine wiſdom, except from a remnant, who according to the grace of his compaſſion were reſerved, that their nation might not be like Sodom and Gomorrah. — The eternal puniſhment of the wicked he avows ſo plainly, that I ſhall ſpare quotations upon that ſubject.

In fundamentals he was unqueſtionably ſound: Yet there ſeems, however, ſomething in his train of thinking, which was the effect of his philoſophic ſpirit; and which produced notions not altogether agreeable to the genius of the Goſpel. Thus, toward the cloſe of the ſecond apology, he declares that the doctrines of Plato were not heterogeneous to thoſe of Chriſt; but only NOT ALTOGETHER ſimilar. And he ſeems to aſſert, that Plato, and the Stoics, and the Pagan writers, in proſe and verſe, ſaw ſomething of truth from the portion of the ſeed of the Divine Word, which he makes to be the ſame as the Word, the only begotten Son of God. The reader, who chuſes to conſult the laſt folio page of the apology may judge for himſelf, whether he does not there confound together two things perfectly diſtinct, — the light of natural conſcience which God has given to all men; — and the light of divine grace peculiar to the children of God. Certain it is, that St. Paul who ſpeaks of both, in the epiſtle to the Romans, always carefully diſtinguiſhes them, as of a kind entirely

different one from the other. He never allows unconverted men to have any portion at all of that light which is peculiarly Chriſtian: But thus it was that this excellent man ſeems to have forgotten the guard, which can ſcarcely be too often repeated, againſt philoſophy. We may ſee hereafter how myſtics and heretics and platonizing Chriſtians jumbled theſe things together entirely, and what attempts were made by the Philoſophers to incorporate their doctrine of the Το εν with the Goſpel *. Juſtin ſeems, unwarily, to have given them ſome handle for this: and, if I miſtake not, he was the firſt ſincere Chriſtian who was ſeduced by human philoſophy to adulterate the Goſpel, though in a ſmall degree. It ſhould ever be remembered, that Chriſtian light ſtands ſingle and unmixed; and will not bear to be kneaded into the ſame maſs with other ſyſtems, religious or philoſophical.—We may here mark the beginning of the decay of the firſt SPIRITUAL EFFUSION among the Gentiles, through falſe wiſdom: as, long before,—namely,—from the firſt council of Jeruſalem,—we noticed a ſimilar decay in the Jewiſh Church, through ſelf-righteouſneſs.

The ſame prejudice in favour of the inſtructor of his youth leads him to pay to Socrates a very great compliment, as if that extraordinary man had really known the true God, and had loſt his life for attempting to draw men from idolatry.—Whereas almoſt every line of the narrative left us by his diſciples ſhews, that he was as much an idolater as the reſt of his countrymen.—The laſt words he uttered, it is well known, were entirely idolatrous.

—Juſtin

* An abſtruſe and myſtical opinion, which prevailed very generally among the antient philoſophers; but which it is difficult to make intelligible by any explanation. It differs, however, very little, if at all, from downright Atheiſm.

—Juſtin had not learnt ſo fully as St. Paul would have taught him, that "the world by wiſdom knew not God." In the laſt page of his Trypho there is alſo a phraſeology extremely ſuſpicious. He ſpeaks of a ſelf-determining power in man *, and uſes much the ſame kind of known reaſoning on the obſcure ſubject of free will as has been faſhionable ſince the days of Arminius. He ſeems to have been the firſt of all ſincere Chriſtians, who introduced this foreign plant into Chriſtian ground. I ſhall venture to call it foreign till it's right to exiſt in the ſoil ſhall be proved from ſcriptural evidence.—It is very plain that I do not miſtake his meaning,—becauſe he never explicitly owns the doctrine of election; though, with happy inconſiſtency, like many other real Chriſtians, he involved it in his experience, and implies it in various parts of his writings.

But,—the ſtranger, once admitted, was not eaſily expelled:—The language of the Church was ſilently and gradually changed, in this reſpect, from that more ſimple and ſcriptural mode of ſpeaking uſed by Clement and Ignatius: Thoſe primitive Chriſtians knew the doctrine of the Election of Grace, but not the ſelf-determining power of the human will:—We ſhall ſee hereafter the progreſs of the evil, and it's arrival at full maturity under the foſtering hand of Pelagius.

* Αυτιξυσιον.

CHAP. IV.

THE EMPEROR MARCUS ANTONINUS AND HIS PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

A. D. 161. HE ſucceeded Pius in the year 161, and appears very ſoon after to have commenced the perſecution againſt the Chriſtians, in which Juſtin and his friends were ſlain. It excites a curioſity, not foreign from the deſign of this hiſtory, to diſcover what could be the cauſe of ſo much enmity againſt a people, confeſſedly harmleſs, in a Prince ſo conſiderate, ſo humane, and, in general, ſo well-intentioned as Marcus is allowed to have been — Beſides; he acted in this reſpect directly contrary to the example of his predeceſſor whoſe memory he doubtleſs much revered, from whoſe intelligent and inveſtigating ſpirit he muſt have derived ample information concerning the Chriſtians, and whom in all other matters of government he imitated ſo exactly. The fact, however, is certainly ſo: Marcus Antoninus was, during all his reign, which continued 19 years, an implacable perſecutor of Chriſtians; and this not from mere ignorance of their moral character.—He knew them,—yet hated them, and ſhewed them no mercy: He allowed and encouraged the moſt barbarous treatment of their perſons; and was yet himſelf a perſon of great humanity of temper: juſt and beneficent to the reſt of mankind: He was free from all reproach in his general conduct; and in ſeveral parts of it was a model worthy the imitation of Chriſtians.

I think it impoſſible to ſolve this phenomenon

on

on any other principles than thoſe by which the enmity of many philoſophers of old, and of many devotees and exact moraliſts of modern times againſt the Chriſtian religion, is to be explained. The Goſpel is not only in it's own nature diſtinct from careleſs and diſſolute vice, but alſo from the whole religion of philoſophers: I mean of thoſe philoſophers who form to themſelves a religion from natural and ſelf-deviſed ſources, either in oppoſition to the revealed word of God, or with the neglect both of that word and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is the great agent in applying the ſcriptures to the heart of man. — In all ages it will be found that the more ſtrenuouſly men ſupport SUCH RELIGION, the more vehemently do they hate Chriſtianity. Their religion is pride and ſelf-importance: It denies the fallen ſtate of man, the proviſion and efficacy of grace, and the glory of God and the Redeemer. — The enmity hence occaſioned is obvious.—It muſt be conſidered alſo that Marcus Antoninus was of the Stoical ſect, — who carried ſelf-ſufficiency to the utmoſt pitch.

He fancied that he carried God within him. Like moſt of the philoſophers he held the myſtical doctrine of the Το εν; but he held it in all it's deteſtable impiety and arrogance. With him to be good and virtuous was the eaſieſt thing in the world: It was only to follow nature, and to obey the dictates of the Deity, — that is, of the human ſoul, which was divine and ſelf-ſufficient. He could not with theſe views be humble; nor pray earneſtly; nor feel his own internal wickedneſs and miſery; nor endure the idea of a Saviour and Mediator.—If, like his predeceſſor, PIUS, he had been contented to be an ordinary perſon in religion, the humanity of his temper would PROBABLY

have led him, as it did the emperor Pius, to have reſpected the excellent character and virtues of Chriſtians; and he would have felt it his duty to have protected ſuch peaceable and deſerving ſubjects.—I ſay, PROBABLY; and I expreſs myſelf with ſome reſerve, becauſe I much doubt, whether he poſſeſſed an underſtanding equally ſound with that of Antoninus Pius.—But, be that as it may, the pride of Philoſophy appears to have been wounded and exaſperated. Whoever has attended to the ſpirit which pervades his twelve Books of Meditations, and duly compared them with the doctrines of the Goſpel, muſt acknowledge a total oppoſition: and then he will not wonder that Chriſtians ſuffered from a ſerious Stoic, what might have been expected only from a flagitious Nero.—Pride and licentiouſneſs are equally condemned by the Goſpel; and they equally ſeek revenge.—If this be a true ſtate of the caſe, the philoſophic ſpirit, explained and ſtated as above, however differently modified in different ages, will always be inimical to the Goſpel; and the moſt decorous moraliſts belonging to the claſs of which we are now ſpeaking, will be found in union, on this ſubject, with the baſeſt characters. "Beware of philoſophy," is a precept which as much calls for our attention now as ever.

Yet ſo faſcinating is the power of prejudice and education, that many would look on it as a grievous crime to attempt to tear the laurels of virtue from the brows of Marcus Antoninus. Certainly, however, if his virtue had been genuine; or at all of a piece with that of the ſcriptures, he could never have treated Chriſtians ſo cruelly, as we ſhall ſee he did.

Is this, then, the man, whom Mr. Pope celebrates in the following lines?

Who

Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or failing ſmiles in exile or in chains,
Like good *Aurelius let him reign, or bleed
Like Socrates, that man is great indeed.

— Providence ſeems however to have determined, that thoſe who, in contradiction to the feelings of human nature, dark and indigent as it is, and needing a divine illumination, will yet proudly exalt their own ability and ſufficiency, ſhall be fruſtrated and put to ſhame. Socrates, with his laſt breath, gave a ſanction to the moſt abſurd idolatry: and Aurelius was guilty of ſuch deeds as human nature ſhudders to relate.

It is remarkable that Gataker, the editor of Antoninus's Meditations, repreſents himſelf, in the moſt humiliating terms, as quite aſhamed to behold the ſuperior virtues of this Prince as deſcribed in this book. — To ſay and to do, are, however, not the ſame things; nor is there much reaſon to believe that Marcus performed in practice, what he deſcribes in theory.—But, excluſively of theſe reflections, ſuppoſe we were inclined to draw a compariſon between the author and his commentator with reſpect to humility, ſuch compariſon would certainly be much to the diſadvantage of the former. I pretend not to have ſtudied the writings of Marcus Aurelius with ſo much anxious care as to be aſſured, that there appear in them no traces of this virtue in the emperor; but the GENERAL TURN of the whole book leads me to conclude, that the writer felt no abaſing thoughts of himſelf. I have already defined in what ſenſe I uſe the term philoſopher, as contraſted with the humble follower of Jeſus Chriſt; and in that ſenſe I affirm that no philoſopher made ſuch a confeſſion of himſelf as Gataker does. — Such is the natural

* Antoninus was called alſo Aurelius.

natural effect of ſome knowledge of Chriſtianity on the human mind!

If we attend to the notices of hiſtory on the education and manners of Marcus, the account which has been given of his enmity againſt the Goſpel will be amply confirmed. Adrian had introduced him among the Salian prieſts when eight years old, and he became accurately verſed in the rituals of his prieſthood. At twelve he began to wear the Philoſopher's cloak: he practiſed auſterities: he lay on the bare ground; and was with difficulty perſuaded by his mother to uſe a mattreſs and ſlight coverlet. He placed in his private chapel gold ſtatues of his deceaſed maſters; and viſited their ſepulchral monuments; and there offered ſacrifices, and ſtrewed flowers. So devoted was he to ſtoiciſm, that he attended the ſchools after he became emperor; and the faith which he put in dreams ſufficiently proves his ſuperſtitious credulity. From a man ſo much lifted up by ſelf-ſufficiency, bigotry, and ſuperſtition, an illiberal cenſure of the Chriſtians* is not matter of ſurpriſe. "This readineſs," ſays he, "of being reſigned to the proſpect of death, ought to proceed from a propriety of deliberate judgment, not from mere unintelligent obſtinacy, as is the caſe with the Chriſtians; it ſhould be founded on grounds of ſolid reaſon, and be attended with calm compoſure without any tragical raptures, and in ſuch a way as may induce others to admire and imitate." If this emperor had ever attended to the dying ſcenes of Chriſtians tortured to death by his orders, with any degree of candour and impartiality, he might have ſeen all theſe circumſtances exemplified. Thouſands of them choſe to ſuffer with deliberate judgment; preferred heavenly things to earthly; counted the coſt; and

* 11th B. Sect. 3d.

and made a reaſonable deciſion; not doubtful, as the emperor was, concerning a future life; but calmly reſigning this life in firm expectation of a better, and without any circumſtances to juſtify the ſuſpicion of pride or oſtentation; on the contrary, they were adorned with meekneſs, cheerfulneſs, and charity. — Hence thouſands and ten thouſands have been induced to examine what that hidden energy of Chriſtian life muſt be, which produces ſuch exalted ſentiments and ſuch grandeur of ſpirit; and the power of prejudice was never more ſtrongly exhibited than in this malignant cenſure of Antoninus; which in truth, is the more inexcuſable, becauſe he laboured under no involuntary ignorance of Chriſtians. For, beſides the knowledge of them which he muſt have acquired under his predeceſſor, he had an opportunity of knowing them from various apologies publiſhed in his own reign. Juſtin's ſecond apology, as we have ſeen, was publiſhed during his reign; one ſentence of which demonſtrates, in how ſtriking a manner our Saviour's prophecy was then fulfilled, "A man's foes ſhall be they of his own houſhold!" —Every where, he obſerves, if a Gentile was reproved by a father or relation, he would revenge himſelf by informing againſt the reprover; in conſequence of which he was liable to be dragged before the governor, and put to death. Tatian alſo, Athenagoras, Apollinaris, biſhop of Hierapolis, and Theophilus of Antioch, and Melito of Sardis, publiſhed apologies. This laſt publiſhed his about the year 177, of which ſome valuable remains are preſerved in Euſebius. A part of his addreſs to Marcus deſerves our attention*, both on account of the juſtneſs of the ſentiments, and the politeneſs with which they are delivered. "Pious perſons,

A. D. 117.

* B. 4. C. 25.

perſons, aggrieved by new edicts publiſhed throughout Aſia, and never before practiſed, now ſuffer perſecution. For audacious ſycophants, and men who covet other perſons' goods, take advantage of theſe proclamations openly to rob and ſpoil the innocent by night and by day. If this be done through your order,—let it ſtand good;—for a juſt emperor cannot act unjuſtly; and we will cheerfully ſubmit to the honour of ſuch a death:—This only we humbly crave of your Majeſty, that, after an impartial examination of us and of our accuſers, you would juſtly decide whether we deſerve death and puniſhment, or life and protection. But, if theſe proceedings be not yours, and the new edicts be not the effects of your perſonal judgment,—edicts which ought not to be enacted even againſt barbarian enemies—in that caſe we intreat you not to deſpiſe us, who are thus unjuſtly oppreſſed." He afterwards reminds him of the juſtice done to Chriſtians by his two immediate predeceſſors.

From this account it is evident that Marcus, by new edicts, commenced the perſecution, and that it was carried on with mercileſs barbarity in thoſe Aſiatic regions which had been relieved by Pius. There is nothing pleaſant that can be ſuggeſted to us by this view of the cruel treatment of Chriſtians and of the author of it, except one circumſtance—that the effuſion of the Spirit of God ſtill continued to produce its holy fruits in thoſe highly-favoured regions.

In the two next chapters I propoſe to deſcribe diſtinctly two ſcenes of this emperor's perſecution; and I ſhall now conclude this general account of him, with briefly mentioning the remarkable ſtory of his danger and relief in the war of the Marcomanni*. He and his army being hemmed in by

* Euſeb. B. 5. C. 5.

by the enemy, were ready to periſh with thirſt; when ſuddenly a ſtorm of thunder and lightning affrighted the enemies, whilſt the rain refreſhed the Romans. It is evident that the victory was obtained by a remarkable providential interpoſition. The Chriſtian ſoldiers in his army, we are ſure, in their diſtreſs would pray to their God, even if Euſebius had not told us ſo. All Chriſtian writers ſpeak of the relief as vouchſafed in anſwer to their prayers, and no real Chriſtian will doubt of the ſoundneſs of their judgment in this point. I have only to add, that Marcus, in a manner agreeable to his uſual ſuperſtition, aſcribed his deliverance to HIS gods. Each party judged according to their own views; and thoſe moderns who aſcribe the whole to the ordinary powers of nature, or to accident, judge alſo according to THEIR uſual profaneneſs or irreligious turn of thinking. Whether the Divine interpoſition deſerves to be called a miracle or not, is a queſtion rather concerning propriety of language than religion. This ſeems to me all that is needful to be ſaid on a fact, which on one ſide has been magnified beyond all bounds; and on the other has been reduced to mere inſignificancy. It happened in the year 174. The emperor lived five years after this event, and as far as appears, continued a perſecutor to the laſt. A. D. 174.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

THE year 167, the ſixth of Marcus, Smyrna was diſtinguiſhed by the martyrdom of her biſhop Polycarp.

We mentioned him before in the account of Ignatius. He had ſucceeded Bucolus, a vigilant and induſtrious biſhop, in the charge of Smyrna. The Apoſtles,—and we may ſuppoſe St. John particularly,—ordained him to this office. He had been familiarly converſant with the Apoſtles, and received the government of the Church from thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes and miniſters of our Lord; and he continually taught that which he had been taught by them*. Uſher† has laboured to ſhew§ that he was the ANGEL of the church of Smyrna addreſſed by our Saviour. If he be right in this, the character of Polycarp is indeed delineated by a hand divine; and the martyrdom before us was particularly predicted. By this account he muſt have preſided 74 years over that Church:—certainly, as we ſhall hereafter ſee, his age muſt have been extremely great: he long ſurvived his friend Ignatius; and was reſerved to ſuffer by Marcus Antoninus. Some time before that event he came to Rome to hold a conference with Anicetus, the biſhop of that See, concerning the time of obſerving Eaſter. The matter was ſoon decided

* Euſeb. 4. C. 14. † In his Prolegom. to Ignatius.
§ Cave's Life of Polycarp.

decided between them, as all matters ſhould be, which enter not into the eſſence of godlineſs. They each obſerved their own cuſtoms without any breach of charity between them, real or apparent. But Polycarp found more important employment while at Rome. The hereſy of Marcion was ſtrong in that city; and the teſtimony and zealous labours of one who had known ſo much of the Apoſtles were ſucceſsfully employed againſt it; and many were reclaimed. It was not in Marcion's power to undermine the authority of this venerable Aſiatic. To procure a ſeeming coalition was the utmoſt he could expect; and it was as ſuitable to his views to attempt this, as it was to thoſe of Polycarp to oppoſe ſuch duplicity and artifice. Meeting him one day in the ſtreet, he called out to him, "Polycarp, own us." "I do own thee," ſays the zealous biſhop, "to be the firſt-born of Satan." I refer the reader to what has been ſaid already of St. John's ſimilar conduct on ſuch occaſions; and ſhall add only that Irenæus, from whom Euſebius relates the ſtory, commends his conduct, and ſpeaks of it as commonly practiſed by the Apoſtles and their followers. Irenæus informs us* that he had a particular delight in recounting what had been told by thoſe who had ſeen Chriſt in the fleſh; that he uſed to relate what he had been informed concerning his doctrine and miracles; and when he heard of any heretical attempts to overturn Chriſtian fundamentals, he would cry out, "To what times, O God, haſt thou reſerved me!" and would leave the place.

Indeed when it is conſidered what Marcion maintained, and what unqueſtionable evidence Polycarp had againſt him in point of matter of fact, we ſhall ſee he had juſt reaſon to teſtify his diſap-

* Irenæus's Epiſtle to Florin.

diſapprobation. This man was one of the DOCETÆ: According to him Chriſt had no real human nature at all: He rejected the whole Old Teſtament, and mutilated the New. He held two principles, after the manner of the Manichees, in order to account for the origin of evil. If men, who aſſert things ſo fundamentally ſubverſive of the Goſpel, would openly diſavow the Chriſtian name, they might be endured with much more compoſure by Chriſtians; nor would there be any call for ſo ſcrupulous an abſence from their ſociety; —for St. Paul has ſo determined the caſe *. But for ſuch men, whether antient or modern, to call themſelves Chriſtians, is an intolerable inſult on the common ſenſe of mankind.—We know nothing more of the life of this venerable biſhop:—Of the circumſtances of his death we have an account, and they deſerve a very particular relation.

The greateſt part of the antient narrative is preſerved by Euſebius †. The beginning and the end, which he has not given us, have been reſtored by the care of archbiſhop Uſher. It is an epiſtle written in the name of Polycarp's Church of Smyrna: I have ventured to tranſlate the whole myſelf, yet not without examining what Valeſius, the editor of Euſebius, and archbiſhop Wake, have left us on the ſubject. It is doubtleſs one of the moſt precious ornaments of antiquity; and it ſeemed to deſerve ſome notes and illuſtrations.

"The Church of God which ſojourns at Smyrna, to that which ſojourns at Philomelium ‡, and in all places where the Holy Catholic Church ſojourns throughout the world, may the mercy, peace, and love

* 1 Cor. v. 10. † B. iv. Euſeb. Hiſt. Ch. XV.

‡ A city of Lycaonia. I thought it right to give the Engliſh reader the preciſe term — of ſojourning — uſed in the original. It was the uſual language and the ſpirit too of the Church at that time.

love of God the Father, and of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt be multiplied! We have written to you, brethren, as well concerning the other martyrs, as particularly the bleſſed Polycarp; who, as it were, ſealing by his teſtimony, cloſed the perſecution. For all theſe things, which were done, were ſo conducted, that the Lord from above, might exhibit to us the nature of a martyrdom perfectly evangelical. Polycarp did not precipitately give himſelf up to death, but waited till he was apprehended, as our Lord himſelf did, that we might imitate him; not caring only for ourſelves, but alſo for our neighbours. It is the office of ſolid and genuine charity not to deſire our own ſalvation only, but alſo that of all the brethren*. Bleſſed and noble indeed are all martyrdoms which are regulated according to the will of God: for it behoves us, who aſſume to ourſelves the character of Chriſtians,—a name profeſſing diſtinguiſhed ſanctity,—to ſubmit to God alone the arbitration of all wants†. Doubtleſs their magnanimity, their patience, their love of the Lord, deſerve the admiration of every one; who though torn with whips till the frame and ſtructure of their bodies were laid open even to their veins and arteries, yet meekly endured; ſo that thoſe who ſtood around pitied

* I tranſlate according to the Greek. But though common candour may put a favourable conſtruction on the expreſſions, the honour then put on martyrdom ſeems exceſſive.

† They doubtleſs mean to cenſure the ſelf-will of thoſe who threw themſelves on their perſecutors before they were providentially called to ſuffer. The calm patience of Polycarp, in this reſpect, much excelled the impetuoſity of Ignatius. But Polycarp now was much older than he was when Ignatius ſuffered, and very probably had GROWN in grace, The Aſiatic churches ſeem to have corrected the errors of exceſſive zeal, which even in the beſt Chriſtians had formerly prevailed. The caſe of Quintus will ſoon throw light on this ſubject.

pitied them and lamented. But ſuch was their fortitude, that no one of them uttered a ſigh or groan: Thus they evinced to us all that, at that hour, the martyrs of Chriſt, though tormented, were abſent, as it were, from the body; or rather that the Lord being preſent, converſed familiarly with them: thus they were ſupported by the grace of Chriſt; thus they deſpiſed the torments of this world, and by one hour redeemed themſelves from eternal puniſhment. The fire of ſavage tormentors was cold to them: for they had ſteadily in view a deſire to avoid that fire which is eternal and never to be quenched. And with the eyes of their heart they had reſpect to the good things reſerved for thoſe who endure,— THINGS — WHICH EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HATH IT ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN TO CONCEIVE. But theſe good things were then exhibited to them by the Lord: They were indeed then no longer men, but angels. In like manner thoſe, who were condemned to the wild beaſts, underwent for a time cruel torments, being placed under ſhells of ſea fiſh, and expoſed to various other tortures, that, if poſſible, the infernal tyrant, by an uninterrupted ſeries of ſuffering, might tempt them to deny their Maſter. Much did Satan contrive againſt them*: but, thanks to God, without effect againſt them all. The magnanimous Germanicus, by his patience and courage, ſtrengthened the weak: He fought with wild beaſts in an illuſtrious manner; for when the Proconſul beſought him to pity his own old age, he irritated the wild beaſts by provocation, and was deſirous of

* The language of theſe antient Chriſtians deſerves to be noticed; they have their eye more ſteadily on a divine influence on the one hand, and on a diabolical one on the other, than is faſhionable in our times.

of departing more quickly from a world of wickedneſs.—And now the whole multitude, aſtoniſhed at the fortitude of Chriſtians, that is, of the true friends and worſhippers of God, cried out, "Take away the atheiſts*, let Polycarp be ſought for." One Chriſtian, by name Quintus, lately come from Phrygia, his native country, on ſight of the beaſts, trembled. He had perſuaded ſome perſons to preſent themſelves before the tribunal of their own accord. Him the Proconſul, by ſoothing ſpeeches, induced to ſwear and to ſacrifice. On this account, brethren, we do not approve of thoſe who offer themſelves to martyrdom;—"for we have not ſo learned Chriſt."

The admirable Polycarp, when he heard what paſſed, was quite unmoved, and reſolved to remain in the city. But, induced by the intreaties of his people, he retired to a village at no great diſtance; and there, with a few friends, he ſpent his time entirely, day and night, in praying, according to his uſual cuſtom, for all the churches in the world.—Three days before he was ſeized, he had a viſion while he was praying: He ſaw his pillow conſumed by fire: and, turning to the company, he ſaid prophetically, "I muſt be burnt alive."—Upon hearing that the perſons, in ſearch of him, were juſt at hand, he retired to another village: Immediately the officers came to his houſe; and not finding him, they ſeized two ſervants, one of whom was induced, by torture, to confeſs the place of his retreat. Certainly it was impoſſible to conceal him, ſince even thoſe of his own houſhold diſcovered him. And the Tetrarch, called Cleronomus Herod, haſtened to introduce him into the Stadium; that ſo he might obtain his lot as a follower

* The term of reproach then commonly affixed to Chriſtians.

lower of Chriſt; and that thoſe, who betrayed him, might ſhare with Judas. Taking then the ſervant as their guide, they went out about ſupper-time, with their uſual arms, as againſt a robber; and arriving late, they found him lying in an upper room at the end of the houſe, whence he might have made his eſcape *, but he would not, ſaying. — "The will of the Lord be done." Hearing that they were arrived, he came down and converſed with them; and all, who were preſent, admired his age and conſtancy: Some ſaid, "Is it worth while to take pains to apprehend ſo aged a perſon?" He immediately ordered meat and drink to be ſet before them, as much as they pleaſed, and begged them to allow him one hour to pray without moleſtation; which being granted, he prayed ſtanding; and was ſo full of the grace of God, that he could not ceaſe from ſpeaking for two hours: The hearers were aſtoniſhed; and many of them repented that they were come to ſeize ſo divine a character.

When he had finiſhed his prayers, having made mention of all whom he had ever known, ſmall and great, noble and vulgar, and of the whole Catholic church throughout the world, the hour of departing being come, they ſet him on an aſs and led him to the city †. The Irenarch Herod, and his father Nicetes, met him, who taking him up into their chariot, began to adviſe him, aſking, "What harm is it to ſay, Lord Cæſar!—and to ſacrifice, and be ſafe?" At firſt he was ſilent, but being preſſed, he ſaid, "I will not follow your advice."

* Thoſe who know the eaſtern cuſtom of flat-roofed houſes, will not be ſurpriſed at this.

† I have not thought it worth while to tranſlate what relates to the time when Polycarp ſuffered, on which point the learned diſagree in the mode of interpretation.

advice." When they could not perſuade him, they treated him abuſively, and thruſt him out of the chariot, ſo that in falling he bruiſed his thigh. But he, ſtill unmoved as if he had ſuffered nothing, went on cheerfully under the conduct of his guards to the Stadium. There the tumult being ſo great that few could hear any thing, a voice from heaven ſaid to Polycarp, as he entered on the Stadium, "* Be ſtrong, Polycarp, and behave yourſelf like a man."—None ſaw the ſpeaker, but many of us heard the voice.—

When he was brought to the tribunal, there was a great tumult, as ſoon as it was generally underſtood that Polycarp was apprehended. The proconſul aſked him, if he was Polycarp, to which he aſſented. The former then began to exhort him,—"Have pity on thy own great age—and the like. Swear by the fortune of Cæſar—repent—ſay—Take away the atheiſts." Polycarp, with a grave aſpect, beholding all the multitude, waving his hand to them, and looking up to heaven, ſaid, "Take away the atheiſts." The proconſul urging him, and ſaying, "Swear, and I will releaſe thee,—reproach Chriſt." Polycarp ſaid, "Eighty and ſix years have I ſerved him, and he hath never wronged me, and how can I blaſpheme my King who hath ſaved me?" The proconſul ſtill urging, "Swear by the fortune of Cæſar." Polycarp ſaid, "If you ſtill vainly contend to make me ſwear by the fortune of Cæſar, as you ſpeak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am. I am a Chriſtian; and if you deſire to learn the Chriſtian doctrine, aſſign me a day, and hear." The proconſul ſaid, "Perſuade the people." Polycarp ſaid, "I have thought proper

* The reader ſhould remember that miraculous interpoſitions of various kinds were ſtill frequent in the church.

proper to addreſs you; for we are taught to pay all honour to magiſtracies and powers appointed by God, which is conſiſtent with a good conſcience. But I do not hold them worthy that I ſhould apologize before them *." "I have wild beaſts," ſays the proconſul: "I will expoſe you to them, unleſs you repent." "Call them," replies the martyr. "Our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worſe: but it is a good thing to be changed from evil to good." "I will tame your ſpirit by fire;" ſays the other, "ſince you deſpiſe the wild beaſts, unleſs you repent." "You threaten me with fire," anſwers Polycarp, "which burns for a moment, and will be ſoon extinct; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal puniſhment reſerved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you pleaſe." Saying this and more, he was filled with confidence and joy, and grace ſhone in his countenance; ſo that he was ſo far from being confounded by the menaces: On the contrary the proconſul was viſibly embarraſſed: he ſent, however, the herald to proclaim thrice, in the midſt of the aſſembly, "Polycarp hath profeſſed himſelf a Chriſtian." Upon this all the multitude, both of Gentiles and of Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, with inſatiate rage ſhouted aloud, "This is the doctor of Aſia, the father of Chriſtians, the ſubverter of our gods, who hath taught many not to ſacrifice nor to adore." They now begged Philip, the Aſiarch, to let out a lion againſt Polycarp. But he refuſed, obſerving, that the amphitheatrical ſpectacles of the wild beaſts were finiſhed. They then unanimouſly ſhouted, that he ſhould be burnt alive;—

for

* I cannot think that this was ſaid in contempt of the vulgar, but on account of the prejudice and enmity which their conduct exhibited at that time.

for his viſion was of neceſſity to be accompliſhed.—Whilſt he was praying, he obſerved the fire kindling, and turning to the faithful that were with him, he ſaid prophetically,—"I muſt be burnt alive:" The buſineſs was executed with all poſſible ſpeed; for the people immediately gathered fuel from the work-ſhops and baths, in which employment the Jews* diſtinguiſhed themſelves with their uſual malice. As ſoon as the fire was prepared, ſtripping off his clothes, and looſing his girdle, he attempted to take off his ſhoes,—a thing unuſual for him to do formerly,—becauſe each of the faithful were wont to ſtrive who ſhould be moſt aſſiduous in ſerving him. For, before his martrydom, his integrity and blameleſs conduct had always procured him the moſt unfeigned reſpect. Immediately the uſual appendages of burning were placed about him. And when they were going to faſten him to the ſtake, he ſaid, "Let me remain as I am; for he who giveth me ſtrength to ſuſtain the fire, will enable me alſo, without your ſecuring me with nails, to remain unmoved in the fire." Upon which they bound him without nailing him. And he, putting his hands behind him, and being bound as a diſtinguiſhed ram ſelected from a great flock, a burnt-offering acceptable to God Almighty, ſaid, "O Father of thy beloved and bleſſed Son, Jeſus Chriſt, through whom we have attained the knowledge of thee, O God of angels and principalities, and of all creation, and of all the juſt who live in thy ſight, I bleſs

* I ſcarce know a more ſtriking view of the judicial curſe inflicted on the Jews than this. Indeed this people all along exerted themſelves in perſecution; and Juſtin Martyr tells us of a charge which had been ſent from Jeruſalem by the chief prieſts againſt Chriſtians directed to their brethren through the world.

bleſs thee, that thou haſt counted me worthy of this day, and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Chriſt, for the reſurrection to eternal life both of ſoul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghoſt; among whom may I be received before thee this day as a ſacrifice well-ſavoured and acceptable, which thou, the faithful and true God, haſt prepared, promiſed before-hand, and fulfilled accordingly. Wherefore I praiſe thee for all thoſe things, I bleſs thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal High Prieſt, Jeſus Chriſt, thy well-beloved Son: through whom, with him in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee both now and for ever. AMEN."

And when he had pronounced Amen aloud, and finiſhed prayer, the officers lighted the fire, and a great flame burſting out,—We, to whom it was given to ſee, and who alſo were reſerved to relate to others that which happened,—ſaw a wonder.—For the flame, forming the appearance of an arch, as the ſail of a veſſel filled with wind, was as a wall round about the body of the martyr; which was in the midſt, not as burning fleſh, but as gold and ſilver refined in a furnace. We received alſo in our noſtrils ſuch a fragrance, as ariſes from frankincenſe, or ſome other precious perfume. At length the impious, obſerving that his body could not be conſumed by the fire, ordered the confector* to approach, and to plunge his ſword into his body. Upon this a quantity of blood guſhed out, ſo that the fire was extinguiſhed, and all the multitude were aſtoniſhed to ſee the difference thus providentially made between the unbelievers and the elect; of whom the admirable perſonage before us was, doubtleſs, one, in our

* An officer, whoſe buſineſs it was in the Roman games to diſpatch any beaſt that was unruly or dangerous.

our age an Apoſtolical and prophetical teacher, the biſhop of the Catholic church of Smyrna. For, whatever he declared, was fulfilled and will be fulfilled. But the envious, malignant, and ſpiteful enemy of the juſt, obſerved the honour put on his martyrdom, and his blameleſs life; and knowing that he was now crowned with immortality and the prize of unqueſtionable victory, ſtudied to prevent us from obtaining his body, though many of us longed to have communion* with his ſacred fleſh. For ſome perſons ſuggeſted to Nicetes, the father of Herod, and the brother of Alce †, to go to the proconſul, and intreat him not to deliver the body to the Chriſtians, leſt, ſaid they, "leaving the Crucified One, they ſhould begin to worſhip him." And they ſaid theſe things upon the ſuggeſtions and arguments of the Jews, who alſo watched us, when we were going to take his body from the pile; unacquainted indeed with our views, namely, that it is not poſſible for us to forſake Chriſt, who ſuffered for the ſalvation of all who are ſaved of the human race, nor ever to worſhip any other ‡. For we adore HIM as being the Son of God; but we juſtly love the martyrs as diſciples of the Lord, and followers of him, on account of that diſtinguiſhed affection which they bore towards their King and their Teacher;—and may we be ranked at laſt in their number! The centurion, perceiving

* I ſee no ground for the well-known Papiſtical inference hence uſually drawn reſpecting the virtues aſcribed to relics. To expreſs an affectionate regard to the deceaſed by a decent attention to the funeral rites, is all that is neceſſarily meant by the expreſſion.

† Alce is ſpoken of with honour in Ignatius's Epiſtle to the Smyrneans. She, it ſeems, had found, in her neareſt relations, inveterate foes to whatever ſhe held dear.

‡ The faith of Chriſt, and a juſt honour paid to true Chriſtians, abſtracted from ſuperſtition and idolatry, appear in this paſſage.

ing the malevolence of the Jews, placed the body in the midſt of the fire, and burnt it. Then we gathered up his bones,—more precious than gold and jewels,—and depoſited them in a proper place; where, if it be poſſible, we ſhall meet, and the Lord will grant us, in gladneſs and joy, to celebrate the birth-day of his martyrdom, both in commemoration of thoſe who have wreſtled before us, and for the inſtruction and confirmation of thoſe who come after*. Thus far concerning the bleſſed Polycarp.—Eleven brethren from Philadelphia ſuffered with him,—but he alone is particularly celebrated by all:—even by Gentiles he is ſpoken of in every place. He was in truth, not only an illuſtrious teacher, but alſo an eminent martyr, whoſe martyrdom all deſire to imitate, becauſe it was regulated exactly by evangelical principles. For by patience he conquered the unjuſt magiſtrate; and thus receiving the crown of immortality, and exulting with Apoſtles and all the righteous, he glorifies God, even the Father, and bleſſes our Lord, even the Ruler of our bodies, and the Shepherd of his Church diſperſed through the world.—You deſired a full account; and we, for the preſent, have ſent you, what will, perhaps, be thought a compendious one, by our brother Mark. When you have read it, ſend it to the brethren beyond you, that they alſo may glorify the Lord, who makes ſelections from his own ſervants of holy men, who ſhall thus honour him by their deaths. To him who is able to conduct us all by his grace and free mercy into his heavenly kingdom, by his only-begotten Son Jeſus

* If we were in our times ſubject to ſuch ſufferings, I ſuſpect theſe anniverſary-martyrdoms of antiquity might be thought uſeful to us alſo. The ſuperſtition of after-times appears not, I think, in this epiſtle.

Jeſus Chriſt, to him be glory, honour, power, majeſty, for ever. AMEN. Salute all the Saints; thoſe with us ſalute you, particularly Evariſtus the writer, with all his houſe. He ſuffered martyrdom on the ſecond day of the month Xanthicus, on the ſeventh day before the Calends of March, on the great ſabbath, at the eighth hour. He was apprehended by Herod, under Philip the Trallian Pontifex, Statius Quadratus being proconſul, but Jeſus Chriſt reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majeſty, an eternal throne from age to age! We pray that you may be ſtrong, brethren, walking in the WORD Jeſus Chriſt, according to the Goſpel, with whom be glory to God, even the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, for the ſalvation of his elected Saints, among whom the bleſſed Polycarp hath ſuffered martyrdom, with whom may we be found in the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, having followed his ſteps!

Theſe things Caius hath tranſcribed from the copy of Irenæus, the diſciple of Polycarp, who alſo lived with Irenæus. And I Socrates of Corinth have tranſcribed from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all. And I Pionius have tranſcribed from the fore-mentioned, having made ſearch for it, and received the knowledge of it by a viſion of Polycarp, as I ſhall ſhew in what follows, collecting it when now almoſt obſolete. So may the Lord Jeſus Chriſt collect me with his elect, to whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. AMEN."

I thought it not amiſs for the Engliſh reader to ſee the manner in which books were then ſucceſſively preſerved in the church, Of Irenæus we ſhall hear more hereafter. Nor ought Pionius's account of his viſion to be haſtily ſlighted, by thoſe who conſider the ſcarcity of uſeful writings in thoſe days.

days. Whether the caſe was worthy of ſuch a divine interpoſition, we, who indolently enjoy books without end, can ſcarce be judges. However, if any chuſe to add this to the number of pious frauds, which certainly did once much abound, the authenticity of the account will ſtill, in ſubſtance, remain unimpeached, as very near the whole of it is in Euſebius. This hiſtorian mentions Metrodorus, a Preſbyter of the ſect of Marcion, who periſhed in the flames among others who ſuffered at Smyrna. It cannot be denied that heretics alſo have had their martyrs. Pride and obſtinacy will in ſome minds perſiſt even to death. But as all, who have been claſſed among heretics, have not been ſo in reality, Metrodorus might be a very different ſort of a man from Marcion.

A comparative view of a ſound Chriſtian Hero ſuffering as we have ſeen Polycarp did, with a Roman Stoic or untutored Indian undergoing afflictions, where we could have an opportunity of ſurveying all circumſtances, might ſhew, in a practical light, the peculiar genius and ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and it's divine ſuperiority. At the ſame time, thoſe who content themſelves with a cold, ſpeculative, and as they term it, rational religion, may aſk themſelves how it would have ſuited their principles to endure what Polycarp did;—and whether ſomething of what is falſely called enthuſiaſm, and which the foregoing epiſtle breathes ſo abundantly, be not really divine and truly rational in the beſt ſenſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

THE MARTYRS OF LYONS AND VIENNE.

*THE flame of the perſecution by Antoninus reached a country, which hitherto has afforded us no eccleſiaſtical materials; I mean that of France, in thoſe times called Gallia. Two neighbouring cities, Vienne and Lyons, appear to have been much favoured with evangelical light and love. Vienne was an antient Roman colony; Lyons was more modern, and her preſent biſhop was Pothinus. His very name points him out to be a Grecian. Irenæus was a Preſbyter of Lyons, and ſeems to have been the author of the epiſtle which Euſebius has preſerved, and which the reader ſhall ſee preſently. Other names concerned in theſe events are evidently of Greek extraction, and it is hence moſt probable that ſome Aſiatic Greeks had been the founders of theſe Churches. Whoever caſts his eye on the map of France, and ſees the ſituation of Lyons, at preſent the largeſt and moſt populous city in that kingdom, next to Paris, may obſerve how favourable the confluence of the Rhine and the Soane,—antiently called the Arar—on which it ſtands, is for the purpoſes of commerce†. The navigation of the Mediterranean, in all probability, was conducted by merchants of Lyons and of Smyrna; and, hence, the eaſy

Rhone

* Euſeb. IV. C. 1.

† When will the moderns, notwithſtanding all their enlightened views and improvements, learn to connect navigation and commerce with the propagation of the Goſpel?

eaſy introduction of the Goſpel from the latter place and from the other Aſiatic churches is apparent. How much God hath bleſſed the work in France, the accounts of their ſufferings will evince. Lyons and Vienne appear to be daughters, of whom their Aſiatic mothers needed not to be aſhamed.

THE EPISTLE OF THE CHURCHES OF VIENNE AND LYONS TO THE BRETHREN IN ASIA AND PHRYGIA*.

The ſervants of Chriſt, ſojourning in Vienne and Lyons in France, to the brethren in Aſia propria and Phrygia, who have the ſame faith and hope of redemption with us, peace, and grace, and glory from God the Father and Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.

We are not competent to deſcribe with accuracy, nor is it in our power to expreſs the greatneſs of the affliction ſuſtained here by the ſaints, the intenſe animoſity of the heathen againſt them, and the complicated ſufferings of the bleſſed martyrs. The grand enemy aſſaulted us with all his might; and by his firſt eſſays, exhibited intentions of exerciſing malice without limits and without control. He left no method untried to habituate his ſlaves to his bloody work, and to prepare them by previous exerciſes againſt the ſervants of God. Chriſtians were abſolutely prohibited from appearing, in any houſes except their own, in baths, in the market, or in any public place whatever. The grace of God, however, fought for us, preſerving the weak and expoſing the ſtrong; who, like pillars, were able to withſtand him in patience, and to draw the whole fury of the wicked againſt themſelves.

* Euſebius does not give the whole of the epiſtle at length, but omits ſome parts, and interrupts the thread of the narrative. It is not neceſſary to notice the particular inſtances.

themſelves. Theſe entered into the conteſt, and ſuſtained every ſpecies of pain and reproach. What was heavy to others, to them was light, while they were haſtening to Chriſt, evincing indeed, that THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT SHALL BE REVEALED IN US. The firſt trial was from the people at large; ſhouts, blows, the dragging of their bodies, the plundering of their goods, caſting of ſtones, and the confining of them within their own houſes, and all the indignities which may be expected from a fierce and outrageous multitude, theſe were magnanimouſly ſuſtained. And now, being led into the Forum by the tribune and the magiſtrates, they were examined before all the people, whether they were Chriſtians; and, on pleading guilty, were ſhut up in priſon till the arrival of the governor*. Before him they were at length brought; and he treated us with great ſavageneſs of manners. The ſpirit of Vettius Epagathus, one of the brethren, was rouſed, a man full of charity both to God and man, whoſe conduct was ſo exemplary, though but a youth, that he might juſtly be compared to old Zacharias: for he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs, a man ever unwearied in acts of beneficence to his neighbours, full of zeal towards God, and fervent in ſpirit. He could not bear to ſee ſo manifeſt a perverſion of juſtice; but, being moved with indignation, he demanded to be heard in behalf of the brethren, and pledged himſelf to prove that there was nothing atheiſtic or impious among them. Thoſe about the tribunal ſhouted againſt him:

* It is probable, but not quite certain, that this governor was Severus, afterwards emperor. The conduct of this governor was worthy of ſo inhuman a prince.

him: He was a man of quality: and the governor, being vexed and irritated by ſo equitable a demand from ſuch a perſon, only aſked him if he were a Chriſtian; and this he confeſſed in the moſt open manner:—the conſequence was, that he was ranked among the martyrs. He was called, indeed, the Advocate of the Chriſtians; but he had an Advocate * within, the Holy Spirit more abundantly than Zacharias, which he demonſtrated by the fulneſs of his charity, cheerfully laying down his life in defence of his brethren; for he was, and is ſtill, a genuine diſciple of Chriſt, following the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth †. The reſt began now to be diſtinguiſhed. The capital martyrs appeared indeed ready for the conteſt, and diſcharged their part with all alacrity of mind. Others ſeemed not ſo ready; but rather, unexerciſed, and as yet weak, and unable to ſuſtain the ſhock of ſuch a conteſt: Of theſe ten in number lapſed, whoſe caſe filled us with great and unmeaſurable ſorrow, and dejected the ſpirits of thoſe who had not yet been apprehended, who, though they ſuſtained all indignities, yet deſerted not the martyrs in their diſtreſs. Then we were all much alarmed, becauſe of the uncertain event of confeſſion, not that we dreaded the torments with which we were threatened, but becauſe we looked forward unto the end, and feared the danger of apoſtacy. Perſons were now apprehended

* It is not eaſy to tranſlate this, becauſe of the ambiguous uſe of the term Παρακλητον, which ſignifies both a comforter and an advocate. Beſides their only advocate in heaven, Jeſus Chriſt, Chriſtians have the comfort and power of his Spirit within.

† Every man who reads this muſt ſee the iniquity and abſurdity of the governor! A term of reproach ſtands in the room of argument. The term Chriſtian has long ceaſed to be infamous. But the words, Lollard, Puritan, Pietiſt, and Methodiſt, have ſupplied it's place.

hended daily of ſuch as were counted worthy to fill up the number of the lapſed, ſo that the moſt excellent were ſelected from the two churches, even thoſe by whoſe labour they had been founded and eſtabliſhed*. There were ſeized at the ſame time ſome of our heathen ſervants,—for the governor had openly ordered us all to be ſought for,—who, by the impulſe of Satan, fearing the torments which they ſaw inflicted on the Saints, at the ſuggeſtion of the ſoldiers, accuſed us of eating human fleſh, and of various unnatural crimes, and of things not fit even to be mentioned or imagined, and ſuch as ought not to be believed of mankind†. Theſe things being divulged, all were incenſed even to madneſs againſt us; ſo that if ſome were formerly more moderate on account of any connections of blood, affinity, or friendſhip, they were then tranſported beyond all bounds with indignation. Now it was that our Lord's word was fulfilled, "The time will come when whoſoever killeth you will think that he doeth God ſervice." The ‡ holy martyrs now ſuſtained tortures which exceed the powers of deſcription: Satan labouring, by means of theſe tortures, to extort ſomething ſlanderous againſt Chriſtianity. The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and the ſoldiers, was ſpent in a particular manner on Sanctus of Vienne, the deacon, and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wreſtler in ſpiritual things, and on Attalus of Pergamus, a man who had

* Hence I judge that their churches were of no great antiquity.

† Hence we ſee again the uſual charge of unnatural crimes objected to the Chriſtians, believed in the paroxiſm of the perſecution, but afterwards generally diſclaimed by ſober perſons.

‡ Surely they needed much the aid of the Heavenly Comforter, promiſed in thoſe diſcourſes, to enable them to ſuſtain the load of calumny ſo injurious and diſtreſſing.

had ever been the pillar and ſupport of our church*, and, laſtly, on Blandina, through whom Chriſt ſhewed, that thoſe things, that appear unſightly and contemptible among men, are moſt honourable in the preſence of God, on account of love to his name, exhibited in real energy, and not in boaſting and pompous pretences. For while we all feared; and among the reſt while her miſtreſs, according to the fleſh, who herſelf was one of the noble army of martyrs, dreaded that ſhe would not be able to witneſs a good confeſſion, becauſe of the weakneſs of her body, Blandina was endued with ſo much fortitude, that thoſe, who ſucceſſively tortured her from morning to night, were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themſelves conquered and exhauſted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to ſee her ſtill breathing whilſt her body was torn and laid open: they confeſſed that any ſingle ſpecies of the torture would have been ſufficient to diſpatch her, much more ſo great a variety as had been applied. But the bleſſed woman, as a generous wreſtler, recovered freſh vigour in the act of confeſſion; and it was an evident refreſhment, ſupport, and an annihilation of all her pains to ſay, "I am a Chriſtian, and no evil is committed among us."

In the mean time Sanctus, having ſuſtained in a manner more than human the moſt barbarous indignities, while the impious hoped to extort from him ſomething injurious to the Goſpel, through the duration and intenſeneſs of his ſufferings, reſiſted with ſo much firmneſs, that he would neither tell his own name, nor that of his nation or ſtate, nor whether he was a freeman or ſlave; but to every interrogatory

* A farther confirmation of the idea that the Goſpel had been brought into France by the charitable zeal of the Aſiatic Chriſtians.

interrogatory he anſwered in Latin, "I am a Chriſtian." This, he repeatedly owned, was to him both name, and ſtate, and race, and every thing; and nothing elſe could the heathen draw from him. Hence the indignation of the governor and of the torturers was fiercely levelled againſt this holy perſon, ſo that having exhauſted all the uſual methods of torture, they at laſt fixed brazen plates to the moſt tender parts of his body. Theſe were made red hot for the purpoſe of ſcorching him, and yet he remained upright and inflexible, and firm in his confeſſion; being, no doubt, bedewed and refreſhed by the heavenly fountain of the water of life which flows from the * belly of Chriſt. His body witneſſed indeed the ghaſtly tortures which he had ſuſtained, being one continued wound and bruiſe, altogether contracted, and no longer retaining the form of a human creature: In this man the view of Chriſt ſuffering wrought great marvels, confounded the adverſary, and ſhewed, for the encouragement of the reſt, that nothing is to be feared where the love of the Father is; and that nothing is painful where the glory of Chriſt is exhibited. For while the impious imagined, when after ſome days they renewed his tortures, that a freſh application of the ſame methods of puniſhment to his wounds, now ſwollen and inflamed, muſt either overcome his conſtancy, or, by diſpatching him on the ſpot, ſtrike a terror into the reſt, as he could not even bear to be touched by the hand, this was ſo far from being the caſe, that, contrary to all expectation, his body recovered its natural poſition in the ſecond courſe of

* An illuſtrious teſtimony to the doctrine of the Spirit's influences, now ſo much depreciated, but which was then the ſupport of ſuffering Chriſtians. The alluſion is to John, 7th chapter, "He that believeth on me, out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water. And this ſpake he of the Spirit."

of torture; he was reſtored to his former ſhape and to the uſe of his limbs; ſo that, by the grace of Chriſt, this cruelty proved not a puniſhment, but a cure.

One of thoſe who had denied Chriſt was Biblias, a female. The devil imagining that he had now devoured her, and deſirous to augment her condemnation, by inducing her to accuſe the Chriſtians falſely, led her to the torture, compelling her to charge us with horrid impieties, as being a weak and timorous creature. But in her torture ſhe recovered herſelf, and awoke as out of a deep ſleep, being admoniſhed, by a temportary puniſhment, of the danger of eternal fire in hell; and, in oppoſition to the impious, ſhe ſaid, "How can WE eat infants,—we, to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of beaſts*." And now ſhe profeſſed herſelf a Chriſtian, and was added to the army of martyrs. The power of Chriſt, exerted in the patience of his people, had now exhauſted the uſual artifices of torment; and the devil was driven to new reſources. Chriſtians were thruſt into the darkeſt and moſt noiſome parts of the priſon: their feet were diſtended in a wooden trunk even to the fifth hole; and in this ſituation they ſuffered all the indignities which diabolical malice could inflict. Hence many of them were ſuffocated in priſon, whom the Lord, ſhewing forth his own glory, was pleaſed thus to take to himſelf. The reſt, though afflicted to ſuch a degree as to ſeem ſcarce capable of recovery under the kindeſt treatment, deſtitute as they were of all help and ſupport, yet remained alive, ſtrengthened by the Lord, and

* Hence it appears that the eating of blood was not practiſed among the Chriſtians of Lyons; and, that they underſtood not chriſtian liberty in this point, will not be wondered at by thoſe who conſider the circumſtances of the firſt Chriſtians.

and confirmed both in body and mind; and theſe encouraged and comforted the reſt.

Some young perſons who had been lately ſeized, and whoſe bodies had been unexerciſed with ſufferings, unequal to the ſeverity of the confinement, expired. The bleſſed Pothinus, biſhop of Lyons, upwards of ninety years of age, and very infirm and aſthmatic, yet ſtrong in ſpirit, and panting after martyrdom, was dragged before the tribunal; his body worn out indeed with age and diſeaſe, yet he retained a ſoul through which Chriſt might triumph. Born by the ſoldiers to the tribunal, and attended by the magiſtrates and all the multitude, ſhouting againſt him as if he were Chriſt himſelf, he made a good confeſſion. Being aſked by the governor, who was the God of the Chriſtians, he anſwered, If ye be worthy, ye ſhall know. He was then unmercifully dragged about, and ſuffered variety of ill treatment: thoſe, who were near, inſulted him with their hands and feet, without the leaſt reſpect to his age; and thoſe at a diſtance threw at him whatever came to hand: every one looked upon himſelf as deficient in zeal, if he did not inſult him in ſome way or other. For thus they imagined they revenged the cauſe of their gods: He was thrown into priſon almoſt breathleſs; and after two days he expired.

And here appeared a remarkable diſpenſation of Providence, and the immenſe compaſſion of Jeſus, rarely exhibited indeed among the brethren, but not foreign to the character of Chriſt. Many, who, when firſt apprehended, had denied their Saviour, were notwithſtanding ſhut up in priſon and ſuffered dreadful ſeverities, as this denial of Chriſt had availed them not. But thoſe, who confeſſed what they were, were impriſoned as Chriſtians, abſtracted from any other charge. Now the former, as

murderers and inceſtuous wretches, were puniſhed much more than the reſt: Beſides the joy of martyrdom ſupported the latter, and the hope of the promiſes, and the love of Chriſt, and the Spirit of the Father. The former were oppreſſed with the pangs of guilt; ſo that, while they were dragged along, their very countenances diſtinguiſhed them from the reſt: But the faithful proceeded with cheerful ſteps: Their countenances ſhone with much grace and glory: Their bonds were as the moſt beautiful ornaments, and they themſelves looked as brides adorned with their richeſt array, breathing the fragance of Chriſt ſo much, that ſome thought they had been literally perfumed. The others went on dejected, ſpiritleſs, and forlorn, and in every way diſgraced, even inſulted by the heathen as cowards and poltroons, and treated as murderers: they had loſt the precious, the glorious, the ſoul-reviving appellation. The reſt, obſerving theſe things, were confirmed in the faith, confeſſed without heſitation on their being apprehended, nor admitted the diabolical ſuggeſtion for a moment.

The martyrs were put to death in various ways: Or, in other words, they wove a chaplet of various odours and flowers, and preſented it to the Father. In truth, it became the wiſdom and goodneſs of God to appoint that his ſervants, after enduring a great and variegated conteſt, ſhould, as victors, receive the great crown of immortality.—Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were led to the wild beaſts into the amphitheatre, to the common ſpectacle of Gentile inhumanity.

One day extraordinary of the ſhews being afforded to the people on our account, Maturus and Sanctus again underwent various tortures in the amphitheatre, as if they had ſuffered nothing before.

Thus

Thus were they treated like thoſe wreſtlers who, having conquered ſeveral times already, were obliged afreſh to contend with other conquerors by freſh lots, till ſome one was conqueror of the whole number and as ſuch was crowned. *Here they ſuſtained again, as they were led to the amphitheatre, the blows uſually inflicted on thoſe who were condemned to wild beaſts; they were expoſed to be dragged and torn by the beaſts, and to all the barbarities which the mad populace with ſhouts exacted, and above all to the hot iron chair, in which their bodies were roaſted, and emitted a diſguſting ſmell. Nor was this all; the perſecutors raged ſtill more, if poſſible, to overcome their patience. But not a word could be extorted from Sanctus, beſides what he firſt had uttered—the word of confeſſion. Theſe then after remaining alive a long time, expired at length, and became a ſpectacle to the world, equivalent to all the variety uſual in the fights of gladiators.

Blandina, ſuſpended to a ſtake, was expoſed as food to the wild beaſts; ſhe was ſeen ſuſpended in the form of a croſs, and employed in vehement ſupplication. The ſight inſpired the combatants with much alacrity, while they beheld with their bodily eyes, in the perſon of their ſiſter, the figure of him who was crucified for them, that he might perſuade thoſe who believe in him, that every one, who ſuffers for the glory of Chriſt, always has communion with the living God. None of the beaſts at that time touched her: ſhe was taken down from the ſtake, thrown again into priſon, and reſerved

* The alluſions to the ſavage ſhews, ſo frequently made in this narrative, point out their frequency in theſe ferocious times; and give us occaſion to reflect on the mild appearances which ſociety has aſſumed, ſince even the form of Chriſtianity has prevailed in the world.

ſerved for a future conteſt; that having overcome in various exerciſes, ſhe might fully condemn the old ſerpent, and fire the brethren with a noble ſpirit of Chriſtian emulation. Weak and contemptible as ſhe might be deemed, yet when clothed with Chriſt the mighty and invincible champion, ſhe became victorious over the enemy in a variety of rencounters, and was crowned with immortality.

Attalus alſo was vehemently demanded by the multitude; for he was a perſon of great reputation among us. He advanced in all the cheerfulneſs and ſerenity of a good conſcience;—an experienced Chriſtian, and ever ready and active in bearing teſtimony to the truth. He was led round the amphitheatre, and a tablet was carried before him, inſcribed in Latin, "This is Attalus the Chriſtian." The rage of the people would have had him diſpatched immediately; but the governor underſtanding that he was a Roman, ordered him back to priſon: and concerning him and others, who could plead the ſame privilege of Roman citizenſhip, he wrote to the emperor, and waited for his inſtructions.

The interval which this circumſtance occaſioned was not unfruitful to the Church.—The unbounded compaſſion of Chriſt appeared in the patience of many: *Dead members were reſtored to life by the means of the living; and the martyrs became ſingularly ſerviceable to the lapſed; and thus the Church rejoiced to receive her ſons returning to her boſom: for by THESE means moſt of thoſe who had denied Chriſt were recovered, and dared to profeſs their Saviour: they felt again the divine life in their ſouls: they approached to the tribunal; and their God, who willeth not the death of a ſinner,

* Dead in their ſpiritual affections.

a ſinner, being again precious to their ſouls, they deſired a freſh opportunity of being interrogated by the governor.

Cæſar * ſent orders that the confeſſors of Chriſt ſhould be put to death; and that the apoſtates from their divine maſter ſhould be diſmiſſed.—It was now the general aſſembly, held annually at Lyons, and frequented from all parts; and this was the time when the Chriſtan priſoners were again expoſed to the populace. The governor again interrogated: Roman citizens had the privilege of dying by decollation; the reſt were expoſed to wild beaſts; and now it was that our Redeemer was magnified in thoſe who had apoſtatized. They were interrogated ſeparate from the reſt, as perſons ſoon to be diſmiſſed, and made a CONFESSION TO THE SURPRISE OF THE GENTILES, and were added to the liſt of martyrs. A ſmall number ſtill remained in apoſtacy; but they were thoſe who poſſeſſed not the leaſt ſpark of divine faith, had not the leaſt acquaintance with the riches of Chriſt in their ſouls, and had no fear of God before their eyes; whoſe life had brought reproach on Chriſtianity, and had evidenced them to be the children of perdition †; but all the reſt were added to the Church.

During

* It muſt be confeſſed that the power of Stoiciſm in hardening the heart was never more ſtrongly illuſtrated than in the caſe of Marcus Antoninus, thus breaking all the rights of Roman citizenſhip, and all the feelings of humanity. It puts me in mind of Mr. Pope's lines,

In lazy apathy let Stoics boaſt
Their virtue fix'd – 'tis fix'd as in a froſt.

† The difference between true and merely profeſſing Chriſtians is well ſtated, and deſerves to be noticed. A ſeaſon of perſecution ſeparates real believers and real experienced Chriſtians from others, much more viſibly than miniſters can now do by the moſt judicious diſtinctions.

During their examination, a man who had lived many years in France, and was generally known for his love of God and zealous regard for divine truth, a perſon of apoſtolical endowments, a phyſician by profeſſion, a Phrygian by nation, and named Alexander, ſtood near the tribunal, and by his geſtures encouraged them to profeſs the faith. He appeared to all who ſurrounded the tribunal as one who travailed in much pain on their account. And now the multitude, incenſed at the Chriſtian integrity exhibited at the concluſion by the lapſed, made a clamour againſt Alexander as the cauſe of this change. Upon which the governor ordered him into his preſence, and aſked him who he was: He declared that he was a Chriſtian: The former, in great wrath condemned him inſtantly to the wild beaſts;—and the next day he was introduced with Attalus. For the governor, willing to gratify the people, delivered Attalus again to the wild beaſts; and theſe two underwent all the uſual methods of torture in the amphitheatre: indeed they ſuſtained a very grievous conflict, and at length expired. Alexander neither groaned nor ſpake a word, but in his heart converſed with God. Attalus, ſitting on the iron chair and being ſcorched; when the ſmell iſſued from him, ſaid to the multitude in Latin, "This indeed which YE do is to devour men; but WE devour not our fellow-creatures, nor practiſe any other wickedneſs." Being aſked what is the name of God, he anſwered, "God has not a name as men have."

On the laſt day of the ſpectacles, Blandina was again introduced with Ponticus, a youth of fifteen: they had been daily brought in to ſee the puniſhment of the reſt. They were ordered to ſwear by the idols; and the mob perceiving them to perſevere

ſevere immoveably, and to treat their menaçes with ſuperior contempt, were incenſed; and no pity was ſhewn either to the ſex of the one or to the tender age of the other. Their tortures were now aggravated by all ſorts of methods; and the whole round of barbarities was inflicted; but menaces and puniſhments were equally ineffectual. Ponticus, animated by his ſiſter, who was obſerved by the heathen to ſtrengthen and confirm him, after a magnanimous exertion of patience, yielded up the ghoſt.

And now the bleſſed Blandina, laſt of all, as a generous mother having exhorted her children, and ſent them before her victorious to the KING, reviewing the whole ſeries of their ſufferings, haſtened to undergo the ſame herſelf, rejoicing and triumphing in her exit, as if invited to a marriage-ſupper, not going to be expoſed to wild beaſts. After ſhe had endured ſtripes, the tearing of the beaſts, and the iron chair, ſhe was incloſed in a net, and thrown to a bull; and having been toſſed ſome time by the animal, and proving quite ſuperior to her pains, through the influence of hope, and the realizing view of the objects of her faith and her fellowſhip with Chriſt, ſhe at length breathed out her ſoul. Even her enemies confeſſed that no woman among them had ever ſuffered ſuch and ſo great things. But their madneſs againſt the ſaints was not yet ſatiated. For the fierce and ſavage tribes of men, being inſtigated by the ferocious enemy of mankind, were not eaſily ſoftened; and they now began another peculiar war againſt the bodies of the Saints. That they had been conquered by their patience, produced no ſtings of remorſe: Indeed the feelings of common ſenſe and humanity appear to have been extinguiſhed among them: Diſappointment increaſed their fury: The devil, the governor, and the mob equally

ſhewed

ſhewed their malice; that the ſcripture might be fulfilled, "He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill," as well as, "He that is holy, let him be holy ſtill*." They now expoſed to dogs the bodies of thoſe who had been ſuffocated in priſon, and carefully watched night and day, leſt any of our people ſhould by ſtealth perform the funeral rites. And then expoſing what had been left by the wild beaſts or by the fire, relics partly torn, and partly ſcorched, and the heads with the trunks, they preſerved them by military guards unburied for ſeveral days. Some gnaſhed on them with their teeth, deſirous, if poſſible, to make them feel ſtill more of their malice. Others laughed and inſulted them, praiſing their own gods, and aſcribing the vengeance inflicted on the martyrs to them. All, however, were not of this ferocious mould. Yet even thoſe who were of a gentler ſpirit, and who ſympathized with us in ſome degree, upbraided us, often ſaying,—"Where is their God,—and what profit do they derive from their religion, which they valued above life itſelf†?"

As for ourſelves, our ſorrow was greatly increaſed becauſe we were deprived of the melancholy ſatisfaction of interring our friends. Neither the darkneſs of the night could befriend us, nor could we prevail by prayers or by price. They watched the bodies with unremitting vigilance, as if to deprive them of ſepulchre was to them an object of great importance. The bodies of the martyrs,

* Rev. xxii. 11. A ſtriking proof of the ſacred regard paid to that divine work—the book of the Revelation,—in the ſecond century.

† A diverſity of temper or education produced a diverſity of conduct among theſe men, while yet all ſeem to have been equally void of the fear and love of God.

martyrs, having been contumeliouſly treated and expoſed for ſix days, were burnt and reduced to aſhes, and ſcattered by the wicked into the Rhone, that not the leaſt particle of them might appear on the earth any more. And they did theſe things as if they could prevail againſt God, and prevent their reſurrection;—and that they might deter others, as they ſaid, from the hope of a future life,—"On which relying they introduce a ſtrange and new religion, and deſpiſe the moſt excruciating tortures, and die with joy. Now let us ſee if they will riſe again, and if their God can help them and deliver them out of our hands*."

Euſebius obſerves here, that the reader may judge, by analogy, of the fierceneſs of this perſecution in other parts of the empire, from this detail of the affairs at Lyons; and then adds ſomething from the epiſtle concerning the humility, meekneſs, and charity of the martyrs; and this he contraſts with the unrelenting ſpirit of the Novatians, which afterwards appeared in the Church. "They were ſuch ſincere followers of Chriſt, WHO, THOUGH HE WAS IN THE FORM OF A MAN, THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD," that, though elevated to ſuch height of glory, and though they had born witneſs for Chriſt not once or twice only, but often, in a variety of ſufferings, yet they aſſumed not the venerable name of martyrs, nor permitted us to addreſs them as ſuch. But if any of us by letter or word gave them the title, they reproved us vehemently. For

* The natural enmity of the human mind againſt the things of God was never more ſtrongly exemplified than in this perſecution. The folly of thinking to defeat the counſels of God appears very conſpicuous; and ſo does the faith and hope of a bleſſed reſurrection,—the peculiarly animating theme of true Chriſtians.

For it was with much pleaſure that they gave the appellation in a peculiar ſenſe to Him who is the FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS, the firſt-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of divine life. And they remembered with reſpect the deceaſed martyrs, and ſaid; THEY indeed were martyrs whom Chriſt hath deigned to receive to himſelf in their confeſſion, ſealing their teſtimony by their exit, but WE are low and mean confeſſors. With tears they intreated the brethren to pray fervently for them, that they might be perfected.

They exhibited, however, in real facts, the energy of the character of martyrs, and anſwered with much boldneſs to the Gentiles: Their magnanimity, undaunted, calm, and intrepid, was viſible to all the world, though the fear of God induced them to refuſe the title of martyrs. They humbled themſelves under the mighty hand by which they are now exalted*. They were ready to give a modeſt reaſon of the hope that was in them before all: They accuſed none: They took pleaſure in commending, none in cenſuring; and they prayed for their murderers, as Stephen the accompliſhed martyr did, "Lord lay not this ſin to their charge." And if HE prayed thus for thoſe who ſtoned him, how much more ought Chriſtians to pray for the brethren?—They never gloried in an unbecoming way over the lapſed; but, on the contrary, they ſupplied their weakneſſes with maternal tenderneſs, and ſhed many tears over them to the Father: they aſked life for them, and he gave them it, which they were glad to communicate to their neighbours. Thus in all things they came off victorious before God,—ever cultivating peace,—ever commending peace;—In peace they went to God, leaving neither trouble

* 1 Pet. v.

trouble to their mother the church, nor faction and ſedition to the brethren; but joy, peace, unanimity, and charity."

Euſebius has given us another paſſage alſo which deſerves attention. Alcibiades, one of the martyrs, had led, before the perſecution, the life of an Aſcetic:—he uſed to ſubſiſt only on bread and water. As he continued the ſame regimen while in confinement, it was revealed in a viſion to Attalus, after his firſt conteſt in the amphitheatre, that Alcibiades did ill not to uſe the creatures of God, and that he gave an occaſion of ſcandal to others. Alcibiades was hence induced to change his diet, and to partake of the bounty of God with thankſgiving.—Euſebius tells us alſo of an epiſtle directed by theſe martyrs to Eleutherus, the biſhop of Rome, in which they give a very honourable encomium of Irenæus the preſbyter. Of him we ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more hereafter. He was appointed ſucceſſor to Pothinus: he outlived the ſtorm, and governed the Church afterwards with much ability and ſucceſs. The letter to the churches of Aſia and Phrygia, of which Euſebius has given us ſuch large and valuable extracts, furniſhes ſtrong proofs of his piety and judgment.

The ſuperſtitions, which afterwards aroſe in ſo great abundance, and with ſo much ſtrength: and which, like a denſe cloud, ſo long obſcured the light of the Church, ſeem ſcarcely to have ſhaded the glory of thoſe Gallic martyrs in any degree. The caſe of Alcibiades, and the wholeſome check which the divine goodneſs put to his well-meant auſterities, demonſtrate that exceſſes of this nature had not yet gained any remarkable aſcendancy in the Church. And the

deſcription

deſcription of the humility and charity of the martyrs ſhews a ſpirit much ſuperior to that which we ſhall have occaſion, with regret, to notice in ſome ſucceeding annals of martyrdom. In a word, the power of Divine Grace appears little leſs than apoſtolical in the church at Lyons. The only diſagreeable circumſtance in the whole narrative is the too florid and tumid ſtile, peculiar to the Aſiatic Greeks; and which Cicero, in his Rhetorical works, ſo finely contraſts with the Attic neatneſs and purity. In a tranſlation it is ſcarce poſſible to do juſtice to thoughts extremely evangelical and ſpiritual, clothed originally in ſo tawdry a garb. Yet under this great diſadvantage a diſcerning eye will ſee much of the "unction" of real godlineſs.—At firſt ſight we muſt be ſtruck with the difference between primitive ſcriptural Chriſtianity, and that affectation of rational divinity, which has ſo remarkably gained the aſcendant in Chriſtendom in our times. In the account we have read, the good influence of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and the evil influence of Satan on the other, are brought forward every where to our view. In our times both are concealed, or almoſt annihilated; and little appears but what is merely human. Whether of the two methods is moſt agreeable to the plan of the ſacred writings, muſt be obvious to every ſerious and honeſt enquirer. Chriſt's kingdom, in the narrative before us, appears truly ſcriptural and divine: Chriſtian faith, hope, and charity, do their work under the direction of his Spirit: Chriſtians are humble, meek, heavenly-minded, patient, ſuſtained continually with aid inviſible; and we ſee Satan actively, but unſucceſsfully, engaged againſt them. In the degenerate repreſentations of

of the Chriſtian religion by many moderns, what a different taſte and ſpirit! — Every thing is of this world! —Policy and ambition leave no room for the exhibition of the work of God and the power of the Holy Ghoſt: The belief of Satanic influence is ridiculed as weak ſuperſtition; and natural, unaſſiſted reaſon, and the ſelf-ſufficiency of the human heart, triumph without meaſure!

CHAP. VII.

THE STATE OF CHRISTIANS UNDER THE REIGNS OF COMMODUS, PERTINAX, AND JULIAN. — THE STORY OF PEREGRINUS.

THE reigns of the two laſt-mentioned emperors, which cloſe the century, are ſhort, and contain no Chriſtian memoirs. That of Commodus is remarkable for the peace granted to the Church of Chriſt through the world*. The means which Divine Providence uſed for this purpoſe is ſtill more ſo. Marcia, a woman of low rank, was the favourite concubine of this emperor. She had, on ſome account not now underſtood, a predilection for the Chriſtians, and employed her intereſt with Commodus in their favour†. He was himſelf the moſt vicious and profligate of all mortals, though the ſon of the grave Marcus Antoninus. Thoſe, who looked at ſecular objects and moral decorum alone, might regret the change of emperors. In one particular point only, namely, in his conduct toward the Chriſtians, Commodus was more juſt and equitable than his father. And the power and goodneſs of God in making even ſuch wretched characters as Commodus and Marcia to ſtem the torrent of perſecution, and to afford a breathing time of twelve years under the ſon, after eighteen years of the moſt cruel ſufferings under the father, deſerve to be remarked. For certainly the

* Euſeb. B. 5. c. 19. † Dion. Caſſius.

the Church of Chriſt has no communion with debauchees; and though it be abhorrent, alſo, in its plan and ſpirit from the ſyſtems of proud philoſophers, yet, it is always friendly to every thing virtuous and laudable in ſociety.—The fact is, It has a taſte peculiarly its own: God's ways are not like ours.—The Goſpel now flouriſhed abundantly; and many of the nobility of Rome, with their whole families, embraced it. Such a circumſtance would naturally excite the envy of the great. The Roman Senate felt its dignity defiled by innovations, which to them appeared to the laſt degree contemptible; and to this malignant ſource, I think, is to be aſcribed the only inſtance of perſecution in this reign.

Apollonius, at that time a perſon renowned for learning and philoſophy in Rome, was a ſincere Chriſtian; and as a Chriſtian was accuſed by an informer before Perennis, a magiſtrate of conſiderable influence in the reign of Commodus. The law of Antoninus Pius had enacted grievous puniſhments againſt the accuſers of Chriſtians. One cannot ſuppoſe his edict had any force during the reign of his ſucceſſor Marcus; but under Commodus it was revived; or rather, a new one, ſtill more ſevere, was enacted, that the accuſers ſhould be put to death*. Perennis ſentenced the accuſer accordingly, and his legs were broken. Thus far he ſeems to have complied with the injunctions of the law: in what follows he obeyed the dictates of his own malice, or rather that of the ſenate. He begged of the priſoner with much earneſtneſs, that he would give an account of his faith before the ſenate and the court. Apollonius complied, and delivered an apology for Chriſtianity; in conſequence of which, by a decree of the ſenate, he was beheaded. It is not quite eaſy to account for this procedure.

* Euſeb. ibid.

procedure. It is perhaps the only trial recorded in hiſtory where both the accuſer and the accuſed ſuffered judicially. Euſebius obſerves, that the laws were ſtill in force, commanding Chriſtians to be put to death, who had been preſented before the tribunal. But Adrian, or certainly Antoninus Pius, had abrogated this iniquitous edict of Trajan. Under Marcus it might be revived,—as what ſeverity againſt Chriſtians was not be expected from that cruel perſecutor? Now Commodus, by menacing accuſers with death, probably ſuppoſed he had ſufficiently ſecured the Chriſtians. Yet, if a formal abrogation of the law againſt Chriſtians did not actually taken place, one may ſee how Apollonius came to ſuffer as well as his adverſary. In truth, if he had been ſilent, it is very likely he would have ſaved his own life. Inſidious artifices, under the pretence of much reſpect and deſire of information, ſeem to have drawn him into a meaſure which coſt him ſo dear:—He died, however, in the beſt of cauſes!

There is, in the work of Lucian, a remarkable ſtory of a perſon named Peregrinus, which, as it falls in with this century, and throws light on the character of the Chriſtians who then lived, deſerves to be here introduced. "In his youth," ſays this author, "he fell into ſhameful crimes, for which he was near loſing his life in Armenia and Aſia. I will not dwell on thoſe crimes; but I am perſuaded that what I am about to ſay is worthy of attention. There is none of you but know, that being chagrined becauſe his father was ſtill alive after being upwards of ſixty years of age, he ſtrangled him. The rumour of ſo black a crime being ſpread abroad, he betrayed his guilt by flight. He wandered about in divers countries to conceal the place of his retreat, till, upon coming into Judea,

Judea, he learnt the admirable doctrine of the Chriſtians, by converſing with their prieſts and teachers. In a little time he ſhewed them that they were but children compared to himſelf: for he became not only a prophet, but the head of their congregation: in a word, he was every thing to them: he explained their books, and compoſed ſome himſelf; inſomuch that they ſpoke of him ſometimes as a god, and certainly conſidered him as a lawgiver and a ruler. — However, theſe people, in fact, adore that great perſon who had been crucified in Paleſtine, as being the firſt who taught men that religion.—While theſe things were going on, Peregrinus was apprehended and put in priſon on account of his being a Chriſtian. This diſgrace loaded him with honour: it was the very thing he ardently deſired: it made him more reputable among thoſe of that perſuaſion, and furniſhed him with a power of performing wonders. The Chriſtians, grievouſly afflicted at his confinement, uſed their utmoſt efforts to procure him his liberty; and as they ſaw they could not compaſs it, they provided abundantly for all his wants, and rendered him all imaginable ſervices. There was ſeen, by break of day, at the priſon-gate, a company of old women, widows, and orphans, ſome of whom, after having corrupted the guard with money, paſſed the night with him: there they partook together of elegant repaſts, and entertained one another with religious diſcourſes. They called that excellent man the New Socrates. There came even Chriſtians, deputed from many cities of Aſia, to converſe with him, to comfort him, and to bring him ſupplies of money; for the care and diligence which the Chriſtians exert in theſe junctures is incredible: they ſpare nothing in ſuch caſes. They ſent,

therefore, large ſums to Peregrinus; and his confinement was to him an occaſion of amaſſing great riches; for theſe poor creatures are firmly perſuaded they ſhall one day enjoy immortal life; therefore they deſpiſe death with wonderful courage, and offer themſelves voluntarily to puniſhment. Their firſt lawgiver has put it into their heads that they are all brethren. Since they ſeparated from us, they perſevere in rejecting the gods of the Grecians, and in worſhipping that deceiver who was crucified: they regulate their manners and conduct by his laws; they deſpiſe, therefore, all earthly poſſeſſions, and uſe them in common. Therefore if any magician or juggler, any cunning fellow who knows how to make his advantage of opportunity, happens to get into their ſociety, he immediately grows rich; becauſe it is eaſy for a man of this ſort to abuſe the ſimplicity of theſe ſilly people. However Peregrinus was ſet at liberty by the preſident of Syria, who was a lover of philoſophy and of its profeſſors; and who, having perceived that this man courted death out of vanity and a fondneſs for renown, releaſed him, deſpiſing him too much to have a deſire of inflicting capital puniſhment on him. Peregrinus returned into his own country, and as ſome were inclined to proſecute him on account of his parricide, he gave all his wealth to his fellow-citizens, who, being gained by this liberality, impoſed ſilence on his accuſers. He left his country a ſecond time in order to travel, reckoning he ſhould find every thing he wanted in the purſes of the Chriſtians, who were punctual in accompanying him wherever he went, and in ſupplying him with all things in abundance. He ſubſiſted in this manner for a conſiderable time;

time; but having done ſomething which the Chriſtians abhor,—they ſaw him, I think, make uſe of ſome meats forbidden amongſt them,—he was abandoned by them; inſomuch that having not any longer the means of ſupport, he would fain have revoked the donation he had made to his country."

The native place of this extraordinary man was Parium in Myſia. After his renunciation of Chriſtianity he aſſumed the character of a philoſopher. In that light he is mentioned by ſeveral heathen authors; and this part he acted till the time of his death; when, in his old age, he threw himſelf into the flames, probably becauſe ſuicide was honourable in the eyes of the Gentiles, and becauſe Empedocles, a brother philoſopher, had thrown himſelf into the vulcano at mount Ætna.—A remark may here be made on the writer, on the hero, and on the Chriſtians of thoſe times.

It will not be neceſſary to give an anxious anſwer to the railleries, cavils, and inſinuations of Lucian in this narrative. Whoever knows any thing of real Chriſtianity, and the uſual obloquy thrown upon it, will eaſily make juſt deductions, and ſeparate what is true from what is falſe. Lucian was one of the moſt facetious authors of antiquity: He doubtleſs poſſeſſed the talents of wit and ſatire in a ſupreme degree. But truth and candour are not uſually to be expected from writers of this ſort: Lucian, like others of the ſame vein, had his eyes turned malignantly towards all objects but himſelf: He was intolerably ſelf-conceited, and may be ranked with Voltaire, Rouſſeau,

* Lardner's Collect. Vol. II. C. 19.—Bullet's Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity.

Rouſſeau, Hume, and other modern writers of that ſtamp: He was ſarcaſtic, unfeeling, and ſuſpicious of evil every where except in his own heart. The common conſequence of ſuch a temper, indulged without reſtraint, is a ſceptical indifference to all ſorts of religion, a contempt of every mode of it without diſtinction, and ſupercilious ſelf-applauſe on account of ſuperior diſcernment. Such men, of all others, ſeem moſt to fall under the cenſure of the wiſe man, HE THAT TRUSTETH HIS OWN HEART IS A FOOL. They take for granted the ſincerity, humanity, and benevolence of their own hearts, with as much poſitiveneſs as they do the obliquity and hypocriſy of other men's. Antiquity had ONE Lucian; and, it muſt be confeſſed the abſurdities of paganiſm afforded him a large field of ſatire, which, eventually, was not unſerviceable to the progreſs of Chriſtianity: Our times have ABOUNDED with writers of this ſtamp; and it is one of the moſt ſtriking characteriſtics of the depravity of modern taſte, that they are ſo much read and eſteemed.

Peregrinus is no very uncommon character. On a leſs extended ſcale, men of extreme wickedneſs in a ſimilar way may frequently be noticed: Men, whoſe early life have been devoted to nothing but vices: Then, afterwards, ſomething of the garb and mode of real Chriſtians is aſſumed by theſe deceivers. But it is not every one who has the abilities of Peregrinus to wear the hypocritical garb ſo aſſumed with conſummate addreſs, and to impoſe on genuine Chriſtians of undoubted diſcernment. The unfeeling heart of Lucian appears to rejoice in the impoſitions of Peregrinus; and particularly, that he was able to impoſe on Chriſtians ſo long and ſo completely. A philanthropic mind

mind would rather have been tempted to mourn over the depravity of human nature, that it ſhould be capable of ſuch wickedneſs. Providence, however, often ſets a diſmal mark upon ſuch men in this life. Peregrinus lived long enough to be proved a complete impoſtor, and to be rendered intolerable to Chriſtians; he acted the philoſopher afterwards, it ſeems, a long time: for what is often called philoſophy is conſiſtent enough with much hypocriſy; and HIS dreadful end ſhould be awfully inſtructive to mankind.

Yet, what is there in all this account of the Chriſtians, diſcoloured as it is by the malignant author, which does not tell to their honour? While Peregrinus made a creditable profeſſion, they received and rejoiced in him: they did not pretend to infallibility. His ſuperior parts and artifice enabled him a long time to deceive. It is probable that he avoided as much as poſſible the ſociety of the moſt ſagacious and penetrating among the Chriſtians. The followers of Jeſus had learnt to ſpare their neighbours' "motes, and and to feel their own beams." They were moſt ſolicitouſly guarded againſt that ſpecies of deception which is the moſt fatal, namely, the deluſion of a man's OWN heart. If many of them were hence too much expoſed to the ſnares of deſigning men, the thing tells ſurely to their honour, rather than to their diſgrace. As for the reſt; their liberality, their zeal, their compaſſion, their brotherly love, their fortitude, their heavenly-mindedneſs, are confeſſed in all this narrative to have been exceeding great. I rejoice to hear from the mouth of an enemy ſuch a teſtimony to the character of Chriſtians: it is one of the beſt which I can meet with in the ſecond century: Amidſt ſuch

ſuch a dearth of materials it was not to be omitted. In morals Chriſtians muſt then have been, at leaſt, much ſuperior to the reſt of mankind; and it is only to be lamented, that he who could relate this ſtory, had not the wiſdom to make a profitable uſe of it for himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

SOME ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIAN AUTHORS WHO FLOURISHED IN THIS CENTURY.

IT may throw additional light on the hiſtory of Chriſtian doctrine and manners in this century, to give a brief view of Chriſtian authors. Some of the moſt renowned have been already ſpoken to, and a few more of great reſpectability muſt be deferred to the next century, becauſe they outlived this.

Dionyſius, biſhop of Corinth, lived under the reign of Marcus Antoninus and his ſon Commodus. He wrote many epiſtles to various churches, which demonſtrate his care and vigilance in ſupport of Chriſtianity;—a pleaſing proof that Corinth was ſingularly favoured by being poſſeſſed of a zealous and charitable paſtor; though of his labours there, and of the ſtate of the numerous ſociety of Chriſtians under his miniſtry, we have no account. He wrote to the Lacedæmonians an inſtruction concerning the doctrine of the Goſpel, and an exhortation to peace and unity. He wrote to the Athenians alſo; and, by his teſtimony, he confirms the account before given of their declenſion after the martyrdom of Publius; and of their revival under the care of Quadratus; and he here informs us that Dionyſius the Areopagite was the firſt biſhop of Athens. In his letter to the Chriſtians in Crete he highly commends Philip the biſhop, and guards them againſt hereſies. In his epiſtle to the churches of Pontus,

Pontus, he directs that all penitents ſhould be received who return to the Church, whatever their paſt crimes have been, even, if guilty of hereſy itſelf. One may hence infer, that diſcipline was as yet adminiſtered with much ſtrictneſs in the churches; and that purity of doctrine, as well as of life and manners, were looked on as of high importance, inſomuch that ſome were inclined to a degree of rigour incompatible with the Goſpel, which promiſes full and free forgiveneſs through Chriſt to every returning ſinner, without limitations or exceptions. Such inferences concerning the manners and ſpirit of the Chriſtians at that time ſeem obvious and natural: The preſent ſtate of church-diſcipline among all denominations of Chriſtians in England would undoubtedly ſuggeſt very different reflections. — He writes alſo to Pinytus, biſhop of the Gnoſſians in Crete, adviſing him not to impoſe on the Chriſtians the heavy burden of the obligation to preſerve their virginity, but to have reſpect to the weakneſs incident to moſt of them. It ſeemed worth while to mention this alſo as a proof that monaſtic auſterities were beginning to appear in the Church; and that the beſt men, after the example of the Apoſtles, laboured to control them. Pinytus in his reply extols Dionyſius, and exhorts him to afford his people more ſolid nouriſhment, leſt, being always fed with milk, they ſhould remain in a ſtate of infancy. This anſwer ſpeaks ſomething of the depth of thought and knowledge in godlineſs, with which Pinytus was endowed.

In his letter to the Romans, directed to Soter their biſhop, he recommends to them to continue a charitable cuſtom, which, from their firſt plantation, they had always practiſed; namely,—to ſend relief to divers Churches throughout the world, and

and to aſſiſt particularly thoſe who were condemned to the mines;—a ſtrong proof both that the Roman church continued opulent and numerous, and alſo that they ſtill partook much of the ſpirit of Chriſt *.

Theophilus of Antioch is a perſon of whom it were to be wiſhed that we had a larger account. He was brought up a Gentile, was educated in all the knowledge then reputable in the world, and was doubtleſs a man of conſiderable parts and learning. His converſion to Chriſtianity ſeems to have been the moſt reaſonable thing imaginable. The Holy Spirit in his operations ever appears to adapt himſelf much to different tempers. Theophilus was a reaſoner; and the grace of God, while it convinced him of his own inability to clear up his doubts, effectually enlightened his underſtanding. The belief of a reſurrection appears to have been a mighty impediment to his reception of the Goſpel: It contradicted his philoſophy.—The notions of proud philoſophers vary in different ages; but they ſeldom fail in ſome form or other, to withſtand the religion of Jeſus.

Of his labours in his biſhopric of Antioch we have no account. He carried on a correſpondence with a learned man named Autolycus; but with what ſucceſs we are not told. He appears alſo to have been very vigilant againſt faſhionable hereſies. He lived thirteen years in his biſhopric; and died in peace about the ſecond or third year of Commodus †.

Melito, biſhop of Sardis, from the very little of his remains that are extant, may be conceived to be one whom God might make uſe of for the revival of godlineſs in that drooping church. The very

* Euſeb. B. 4 C. 23.
† Euſeb. B. 4. C. 23. and Cave's Life of Theophilus.

very titles of ſome of his works excite our regret for the loſs of them. One of them is on the ſubmiſſion of the ſenſes to faith; another on the ſoul, the body, and the ſpirit; another on God incarnate. A fragment of his, preſerved by the author of the Chronicle, called the Alexandrian, ſays, "that the Chriſtians do not adore inſenſible ſtones, but that they worſhip one God alone, who is before all things and in all things, and Jeſus Chriſt who is God before all ages." He lived under the reign of Marcus Antoninus. His unſucceſsful but maſterly apology preſented to that emperor has already been noticed. He travelled into the eaſt on purpoſe to collect authentic eccleſiaſtical information; and he gives us a catalogue of the ſacred books of the Old Teſtament. He died and was buried at Sardis;—a man whom Polycrates, biſhop of Epheſus, his contemporary, calls an eunuch, that is, one who made himſelf an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's ſake*. Several ſuch, I apprehend, were in the primitive times. But the depravity of human nature is ever puſhing men into extremes. There ſoon aroſe ſome, who made a ſelf-righteous uſe of theſe inſtances of ſelf-denial; and clogged them with unwarrantable exceſſes. The contrary extreme is now ſo prevalent, that,—if a perſon were to follow the example of Melito on the ſame generous principles which our Saviour expreſſes,—it would be thought very extraordinary, and even ridiculous. But, whatever has the ſanction of Holy Writ, ſhould be noticed to the honour of thoſe who practiſe it, whether agreeable to the taſte of the age we live in or not, unleſs we mean to ſet up the eighteenth century as a ſort of Pope to judge the foregoing ſeventeen.—The ſame Polycrates obſerves of him, that his actions

* Matthew xix. Euſeb. B. 4. C. 25. Dupin and Cave.

actions were regulated by the motions of the Holy Ghoſt; and that he lies interred at Sardis, where he expects the judgment and reſurrection.

Bardaſanes of Meſopotamia, a man renowned for learning and eloquence, eſcaped not the pollution of the fantaſtic hereſy of Valentinian. His talents and his love of refinement were probably his ſnare; but, as he afterwards condemned the fabulous dreams by which he had been infatuated, and as he is allowed to be ſound in the main, ſome relics of his former hereſy might be left without materially injuring either his faith or his practice. I know no particular reaſon for mentioning him at all, but for the ſake of introducing a remarkable paſſage of his writings, preſerved by Euſebius *, which ſhews at once the great progreſs and the powerful energy of Chriſtianity.

"In Parthia," ſays he, "polygamy is allowed and practiſed, but the Chriſtians of Parthia practiſe it not. In Perſia the ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to inceſt. In Bactria and in Gaul the rights of matrimony are defiled with impunity. The Chriſtians there act not thus. In truth, wherever THEY reſide, they triumph in their practice over the worſt of laws and the worſt of cuſtoms." This eulogium is not more ſtrong than juſt.—In what age did human inventions, whether philoſophical or religious, produce ſuch fruits as theſe?

Miltiades was uſefully engaged in diſcriminating the genuine influences of the Holy Spirit from the fictitious,—of which unhappy inſtances had then appeared. Falſe prophets evinced at firſt the moſt ſtupid ignorance, and afterwards a diſtempered imagination and furious frenzy. Miltiades ſhewed that the influence of the Holy Spirit deſcribed in ſcripture,

* Euſeb. Precep. Evang. Jortin's Remarks IV.

ſcripture, was ſober, conſiſtent, reaſonable. There is no new thing under the ſun: impoſtures and deluſions exiſt at this day;—and why ſhould it not be thought as reaſonable now as it was then—to diſcriminate genuine from fictitious or diabolical influences, by laying down the true marks and evidences of each, inſtead of ſcornfully treating all alike as enthuſiaſtic? The extraordinary and miraculous influences chiefly come under Miltiades's inſpection; for theſe were at that time very common in the Chriſtian church; ſo were deluſive pretences alſo; particularly thoſe of Montanus and of his followers.—Let the diſcerning reader apply the obſervations to be made on theſe and ſimilar facts to our own times.

Apollinarius of Hierapolis wrote ſeveral books under the reign of Marcus Antoninus. We have at preſent only their titles. One of them was a Defence of Chriſtianity, dedicated to the emperor. The work, of which we know the moſt, from a fragment preſerved in Euſebius, is that againſt the Montaniſts, which will fall under our obſervation in the next chapter.

Athenagoras, towards the latter end of this century, wrote an apology for the Chriſtian Religion. His teſtimony to the doctrine of the Trinity, contained in it, expreſſes ſomething beſides a ſpeculative belief of it. It ſeems to have appeared to him of eſſential conſequence in practical godlineſs. He is a writer not mentioned by Euſebius. Du Pin does him injuſtice by obſerving that he recommends the worſhip of angels. I have not acceſs to his apology, but ſhall give a remarkable quotation from Dr. Waterland, to whom I am obliged for the only valuable information I have of this author*. Speaking of Chriſtians, he deſcribes them

* Epiphanius Hereſ. 54. 1. See Dr. Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

them as " men that made ſmall account of the preſent life, but were intent only upon contemplating God and knowing his Word who is from him, —what union the Son has with the Father, what communion the Father has with the Son, what the Spirit is, and what the union and diſtinction are of ſuch ſo united, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father."

If this be true,—and Athenagoras may well be credited for the fact—it is not to be wondered at, that the primitive Chriſtians were ſo anxiouſly tenacious of the doctrine. It was the climate in which alone Chriſtian fruit could grow. Their ſpeculations were not merely abſtracted. They found, in the view of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, ſomething of that energy which could raiſe them from earth to heaven: That is, they found the peculiar truths of the Goſpel, which are ſo cloſely interwoven with the doctrine of the Trinity. The right uſe of the doctrine is briefly, but ſtrongly intimated in this paſſage;—and the connection between Chriſtian principles and practice appears. In truth, a Trinitarian ſpeculatiſt may be as worldly-minded as any other perſon. His doctrine, however, contains that which alone can make a man fix " his affections on things above."

CHAP. IX.

THE HERESIES AND CONTROVERSIES OF THIS CENTURY REVIEWED, AND AN IDEA OF THE STATE AND PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY DURING THE COURSE OF IT.

MY plan calls me not to notice minutely all the hereſies which appeared in this century: but I would not omit them, whenever they may throw light on the work of God's Holy Spirit and the progreſs of godlineſs.—On their own account, they deſerved not much attention; yet it was neceſſary to examine and confute ſome of them: and Irenæus acted charitably in ſo doing. It is, however, to be regretted, that in his celebrated work againſt hereſies, he ſhould be obliged to employ ſo much time on ſcenes of nonſenſe.—Let it be remarked in general, that the ſame oppoſition to the Deity of Chriſt, or his manhood, and the ſame inſidious methods of depreciating or abuſing the doctrines of grace, continued in the ſecond century, which had begun in the firſt, with this difference, that they were now multiplied, varied, complicated, and refined by endleſs ſubtilties and fancies, in which the poverty of taſte and genius, ſo common in a period when letters are declining, diſcovers itſelf no leſs than the Chriſtian doctrine. Like ſpots in the ſun, however, they vaniſhed and diſappeared from time to time; though revived again in different forms and circumſtrnces. Not one of the hereſiarchs of this century was able to create

create a ſtrong and permanent intereſt; and it is no little proof of the continued goodneſs and grace of God to his Church, that the ſound Chriſtians ſtill kept themſelves ſeparate and diſtinct, and preſerved the purity of diſcipline.

It has often been ſaid, that many have been enliſted among heretics, who were real Chriſtians. When I ſee a proof of this, I ſhall take notice of it. But of the heretics in the ſecond century, I fear, in general, no ſuch favourable judgment ought to be paſſed. The ſtate of Chriſtian affairs, in truth, was ſuch as to afford no probable reaſon for any real good man to diſſent. Where was there more of piety and virtue to be found than among the general ſociety of Chriſtians? And how could any perſons be more expoſed to the croſs of Chriſt than they were?

1. The firſt ſet of heretics of this century, were thoſe who oppoſed or corrupted the doctrines of the perſon of Chriſt. A ſingle quotation from Euſebius may be ſufficient, as a ſpecimen.

Speaking of the books which were publiſhed in theſe times, he obſerves*, "Among them there is found a volume written againſt the hereſy of Artemon, which Paulus of Samoſata in our days endeavoured to revive." When this book had confuted the ſaid preſumptuous hereſy, which maintained Chriſt to be a mere man and that this was an antient opinion; after many leaves tending to the confutation of this blaſphemous falſhood, the author writes thus: 'They affirm that all our anceſtors, even the apoſtles themſelves, were of that opinion, and taught the ſame with them, and that this their true doctrine was preached and embraced to the time of Victor, the the thirteenth biſhop of Rome after Peter, and was corrupted by his

* B. 5. 25.

his ſucceſſor Zephyrinus. This might carry a plauſible appearance of truth, were it not, in the firſt place, contradicted by the Holy Scriptures, and in the next, by the books of ſeveral perſons, which they publiſhed long before the time of Victor, againſt the gentiles in the defence of the truth and in confutation of the hereſies of their times. I mean Juſtin, Miltiades, Tatian, and Clement, with many others, in all which works Chriſt is preached and publiſhed to be God. Who knoweth not that the works of Irenæus, Melito, and all other Chriſtians do confeſs Chriſt to be both God and Man? In fine, how many pſalms, and hymns, and canticles were written from the beginning by faithful Chriſtians, which celebrate Chriſt, the Word of God, as no other than God indeed? How then is it poſſible, according to their report, that our anceſtors, to the days of Victor, ſhould have preached in that way, when the creed of the Church for ſo many years is pronounced as certain, and known to all the world? And ought they not to be aſhamed to report ſuch falſehoods of Victor, when they know it to be a fact, that this very Victor excommunicated Theodotus, a tanner, the father of this apoſtacy, who denied the divinity of Chriſt, becauſe he firſt affirmed Chriſt to be only man. If Victor, as they report, had been of their blaſphemous ſentiments, how could he have excommunicated Theodotus the author of the hereſy?'

Victor's government was about the cloſe of the ſecond century. The anonymous author before us writes moſt probably in the former part of the third. Nor is his teſtimony much invalidated by his being anonymous. The facts to which he ſpeaks were notorious and undeniable. We ſee hence, that all parties, notwithſtanding the contempt, which ſome affect, of the teſtimony of antiquity

quity and tradition, are glad to avail themſelves of it where they can; which is itſelf a proof of the tacit conſent of all mankind, that this teſtimony, though by no means deciſive, nor ſuch as ought ever to be put in competition with ſcripture, yet weighs ſomething, and ought not to be treated with unreſerved diſdain. In our own days the ſame attempt has been made in the ſame cauſe; —with what probability of ſucceſs, in the way of ſound argument, let the reader, who has conſidered the paſſage I have quoted from Euſebius, judge for himſelf. In fact, it appears that a denial of the Deity of Chriſt could not find any patron within the pale of the Church for the firſt two hundred years. The prevalency of ſentiments derogatory to the perſon and offices of Chriſt was reſerved for a later period. Every perſon of any eminence in the Church for judgment and piety holds unequivocally an oppoſite language. In ſome of the moſt renowned we have ſeen it all along in the courſe of this century.

This Theodotus was a citizen of Byzantium, a tanner, but a man of parts and learning. Heretical perverſions of Scripture have often been invented by ſuch perſons: Pride and ſelf-conceit ſeem to have a peculiar aſcendancy over men who have acquired knowledge in private by their own induſtry: And doubtleſs one of the beſt advantages of public ſeminaries is this,—that modeſty and reaſonable ſubmiſſion are inculcated in them; and men, by ſeeing and feeling their own inferiority, are taught to think more lowly of their own attainments. This ſelf-taught tanner ſpeculated; felt himſelf important enough to be ſingular; and revived the hereſy of Ebion. He was brought with ſome other Chriſtians before perſecuting magiſtrates: His companions honeſtly confeſſed Chriſt

and ſuffered: He was the only man of the company who denied him. In truth, he had no principles ſtrong enough to induce him to bear the croſs of Chriſt. Theodotus lived ſtill a denier of Chriſt, and being afterwards upbraided for denying his God; "No," ſays he, "I have not denied God, but man; for Chriſt is no more*." His hereſy hence obtained a new name, that of the God-denying apoſtacy†. Perſecution frequently does in this life, in part, what the laſt day will do completely,—ſeparate wheat from tares!

2. The controverſy concerning the proper time of the obſervation of Eaſter, which had been amicably adjuſted between Polycarp of Smyrna and Anicetus of Rome, who had agreed to differ, was unhappily revived towards the cloſe of this century: Synods were held concerning it: and an uniformity was attempted in vain throughout the Church. Victor of Rome, with much arrogance and temerity, as if he had felt the very ſoul of the future papacy formed in himſelf, inveighed againſt the Aſiatic churches, and pronounced them excommunicated perſons. The firmneſs, moderation, and charity of one man was of great ſervice in quaſhing this dangerous contention. Irenæus, biſhop of Lyons, rebuked the uncharitable ſpirit of Victor, reminded him of the union between Polycarp and his predeceſſor Anicetus, notwithſtanding their difference of ſentiment and practice in this point, and preſſed the ſtrong obligation of Chriſtians to love and unity, though they might differ in ſmaller matters; and ſurely a ſmaller matter of diverſity was ſcarcely ever known to occaſion contention.

The

* Damaſcen. Heres. 54. † Αρνησιθεος αποστασια.

The particulars of the debate are not worthy of recital.—Certain fundamentals being ſtated in the firſt place, in which all real Chriſtians are united, they may ſafely be left, each ſociety to follow its private judgment in other things; and,—ſurely,—yet hold the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace. But that this was effected with ſo much difficulty, and that ſo ſlight a ſubject ſhould appear of ſo great a moment at this time, ſeems no ſmall proof that the power of true godlineſs had ſuffered ſome declenſion; and was an omen, towards the cloſe of this century, of the decay of the happy effects of the firſt great Effuſion of the Spirit. When faith and love are ſimple, ſtrong, and eminently active, ſuch ſubjects of debate are ever known to vaniſh like miſts before the ſun.

3. The Church was internally ſhaken and much disfigured by the hereſy of Montanus. This is the account of it given by Apollinaris of Hierapolis, who took pains to confute it*. "Being lately at Ancyra in Galatia, I found the Church throughout filled,—not with prophets, as they call them, but with falſe prophets; where with the help of the Lord, I diſputed publickly for many days againſt them, ſo that the Church rejoiced and was confirmed in the truth; and the adverſaries were vexed and murmured. It originated in the following manner: There is a village in Myſia, a region of Phrygia, called Ardaba, where we are told that Montanus, a late convert in the time of Gratus, proconſul of Aſia, gave advantage to Satan by being elated with ambition. The man behaved in a frantic manner, and pretended to prophecy. Some who heard him, checked him as a lunatic, and forbad his public exhibitions, mindful of our Saviour's predictions and warnings againſt

* Euſeb. B. C. 14.

againſt falſe prophets: but others boaſted of him as endued with the Holy Ghoſt, and forgetting the divine admonitions, were ſo enſnared by his arts as to encourage the impoſture. Two women were by Satan poſſeſſed of the ſame ſpirit, and ſpake fooliſh and fanatical things. They gloried in their own ſuppoſed ſuperior ſanctity and happineſs; and were deluded with the moſt flattering expectations.—Few of the Phrygians were ſeduced, though they took upon them to revile every Church under heaven which did not pay homage to their pretended inſpirations. The faithful throughout Aſia in frequent ſynods examined and condemned the hereſy."

It has ever been one of the greateſt trials to men really led by the Spirit of God,—beſides the open oppoſition of the prophane,—to be obliged to encounter the ſubtil devices of Satan, who often raiſes up pretended illuminations, and ſo connects them with deluſion, folly, wickedneſs and ſelf-conceit, that they expoſe true godlineſs to the imputation of enthuſiaſm, and to contempt and diſgrace. The marks of diſtinction are plain to minds which are ſerious and of tolerable judgment and diſcretion; but, men, void of the fear of God will not diſtinguiſh. We ſee here an inſtance of what has often been repeated from that day to the preſent in the Church of Chriſt; and Chriſtians ſhould never fail to do now, what they then did,—namely,—they ſhould examine, expoſe, condemn, and ſeparate themſelves from ſuch deluſions: The enthuſiaſts of every age follow the pattern of Montanus in folly, pride, and uncharitableneſs: Nothing happens here but what is foretold in Scripture: and in truth, deluſions of this ſort ſo generally accompany the real work of God, that wherever that appears, theſe very ſeldom fail to appear alſo.

4. But the eruptions of fanaticiſm are too wild and unnatural to remain long in any degree of ſtrength.

ſtrength. Whatever high pretenſions they make to the influences of the Divine Spirit, they are ever unfavourable to them in reality; not only by their unholy tendency during the paroxyſm of zeal, but much more ſo by the effects of contemptuous profaneneſs and incredulous ſcepticiſm which they leave behind them. It is for the ſake of theſe chiefly that Satan ſeems to invent and ſupport ſuch deluſions.—But his grand reſource againſt the Goſpel is drawn from contrivances more congenial with the nature of man. Human philoſophy after the rudiments of the world and not after Chriſt, formed the laſt corruption of this century;—which I ſhall lay open, to the beſt of my judgment, from the lights of hiſtory. It was toward the cloſe of the century that it made its appearance, nor were the effects of it very great at preſent: In the next century they appeared very diſtinctly.

Alexandria was at this time the moſt renowned ſeminary of learning. A ſort of philoſophers there appeared who called themſelves Eclectics, becauſe, without tying themſelves down to any one ſet of rules, they choſe what they thought moſt agreeable to truth from different maſters and ſects. Their pretenſions were ſpecious; and while they preſerved the appearance of candour, moderation, and diſpaſſionate inquiry, they adminiſtered much fuel to the pride of men leaning to their own underſtandings. Ammonius Saccas, a famous Alexandrian teacher, ſeems to have reduced the opinions of this ſect to a ſyſtem. Plato was his principal guide; but he invented many things of which Plato never dreamed. What his religious profeſſion was is diſputed among the learned. Undoubtedly he was educated a Chriſtian; and, though Porphyry, in his enmity againſt Chriſtianity, obſerves that he forſook the Goſpel and returned

returned to gentiliſm, yet the teſtimony of Euſebius*, who muſt have known, ſeems deciſive to the contrary;—it proves, that he continued a Chriſtian all his days: His tracts on the agreement of Moſes and Jeſus, and his harmony of the four Goſpels demonſtrate that he deſired to be conſidered as a Chriſtian. This man fancied that all religions, vulgar and philoſophical, Grecian and barbarous, Jewiſh and Gentile, meant the ſame thing at bottom. He undertook, by allegorizing and ſubtilizing various fables and ſyſtems, to make up a coalition of all ſects and religions; and, from his labours continued by his diſciples — ſome of whoſe works ſtill remain, — his followers were taught to look on Jew, Philoſopher, vulgar Pagan, and Chriſtian, as all of the ſame creed.

Dr. Lardner, in oppoſition to Moſheim, who ſeems to have very ſucceſsfully illuſtrated this matter, contends that there were no ſuch motley-mixed characters, and that the ſcheme is chimerical. I have attended cloſely to Dr. Lardner's own account of this teacher; and alſo to his review of philoſophers in the third and following centuries; and it appears to me, that perſons of the claſs deſcribed did actually exiſt. Ammonius himſelf ſeems to have been, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, a Pagano-Chriſtian. That Euſebius and Porphyry ſhould each claim him for their own, is no little proof of his ambiguous character; and I wiſh we may not have too melancholy proofs of the ſame thing, when we come to conſider the characters of many of the fathers who followed. Longinus, who was of the ſame ſchool, though more a philologiſt than a philoſopher, in his well-known reſpectful quotation from Moſes, evinces that he was tinctured with a ſimilar

* B. 6. C. 18. Ec. Hiſt.

ſimilar ſpirit. Plotinus is largely and fully in the ſame ſcheme. Who knows whether to call Ammianus the hiſtorian, and Chalcidius, Chriſtian or Pagan? They affected to be both; or rather pretended that both meant the ſame thing; and in the fourth and fifth century, though ſome, with Porphyry, through the virulence of their oppoſition, were decided enemies of Chriſt, it is certain that many ambiguous characters abounded among the Chriſtians.

In truth, we ſee in every age ſimilar ſcenes. The Goſpel in its infancy has to ſtruggle with the open and avowed enmity of all mankind. He, whoſe deciſive power alone can do it, after floods of perſecution and a thouſand diſcouragements, gives his religion a ſettlement in the world too ſtrong to be overturned, as its enemies hoped at firſt would be the caſe. The light of divine truth fails not to make ſome impreſſions on minds by no means converted through it to God. Chriſtianity, though it enforces its truths with much greater clearneſs than natural religion does; and though it proves its ſuperiority, by exhibiting men who practiſe accordingly, ſtill has many truths in common with natural religion: Thence ingenious perſons are ready to perſuade themſelves, that their philoſophy and the Goſpel mean the ſame in ſubſtance: They compliment Chriſtianity with ſome reſpectful attention, and yet ſtudiouſly avoid the croſs of Chriſt, and the preciſe peculiarities of the Goſpel, in order to preſerve their credit in the world. We may all have ſo much noticed this diſpoſition in men, and the number of doubtful characters in conſequence, that Moſheim's account cannot, I think, appear difficult of admiſſion.

Undoubtedly

Undoubtedly the appearance of perſons of this ſort is a ſure ſymptom that the Goſpel is raiſed to ſome degree of eminence and ſtability in the world. In the firſt century ſuch an ambiguous character would have been a rare phenomenon. Philoſophers found no deſire to coaleſce with a religion contemptible in their eyes in all reſpects. It was not till numbers gave it ſome reſpectability, that a coalition of that kind took place. Seneca would have thought himſelf ſufficiently liberal in not perſecuting, but only deſpiſing the ſame religion, which Ammonius, a century afterwards, deigned to incorporate, in pretence at leaſt, with his philoſophy.—It has been obſerved, that the attempt of the court of Charles the firſt to draw over ſome of the parliamentary leaders to their intereſt, was a ſure ſign of the diminution of regal deſpotiſm. Satan beheld the decay of his empire of idolatry and philoſophy in the ſame light; and it behoved him to try the ſame arts to preſerve what remained. Melancholy and diſaſtrous as was the evil we are contemplating, and even more deciſively deſtructive to the progreſs of vital godlineſs than any other which had yet appeared, it was, however, an evidence of the victorious ſtrength of the Goſpel, and a confeſſion of weakneſs on the part of paganiſm.

In carrying on theſe facts of ſeduction, the inſidiouſneſs of ſuch middle characters conſiſted much in expatiating on the truths which lie in common, as of the greateſt importance; and in reducing, as far as in them lay, the peculiar truths of the Goſpel into oblivion. It was juſt in this manner, I remember, that* a clergyman ſpeaks in a celebrated ſermon preached on the acceſſion of James the ſecond. While he deals out ſtrains of fulſome adulation

* The vicar of Newcaſtle.

adulation on the ſovereign, he anſwers the objection againſt him drawn from his religion, by obſerving of what little importance opinions were; and that moral and practical matters were alone worthy of conſideration. The conduct of James, in a little time after, ſhewed the weakneſs of this reaſoning: and the effects of this philoſophical evil, which like leaven ſoon ſpread in ſome faint degree over the whole Church, ſhewed too plainly that pure and undefiled ſentiments of religion are of high importance.

We have hitherto found it no hard matter to diſcover, in the teachers and writers of Chriſtianity, the vital doctrines of Chriſt. We ſhall now perceive that the moſt precious truths of the Goſpel begin to be leſs attended to, and leſs brought into view. Even Juſtin Martyr, before the period of eclectic corruption, by his fondneſs for Plato adulterated the Goſpel in ſome degree, as we have obſerved, particularly in the article of free-will. Tatian, his ſcholar went bolder lengths, and deſerved the name of heretic. He dealt largely in the merits of continence and chaſtity; and theſe virtues, puſhed into extravagant exceſſes, under the notion of ſuperior purity, became great engines of ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſuperſtition, and obſcured men's views of the faith of Chriſt, and darkened the whole face of Chriſtianity. Under the foſtering hand of Ammonius and his followers, this fictitious holineſs, diſguiſed under the appearance of eminent ſanctity, was formed into a ſyſtem; and it ſoon began to generate the worſt of evils. That man is altogether fallen,—that he is to be juſtified wholly by the faith of Chriſt,—that his atonement and mediation alone procures us acceſs to God and eternal life,—that holineſs is the effect of divine Grace, and is the proper work

work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man;—theſe,—and if there be any other ſimilar evangelical truths,—as it was not poſſible to mix them with Platoniſm, faded gradually in the Church, and were at length partly denied, and partly forgotten.

St. Paul's caution againſt philoſophy and vain deceit, it appears, was now fatally neglected by the Chriſtians. Falſe humility, "will-worſhip," curious and proud refinements, bodily auſterities mixed with high ſelf-righteous pretenſions, ignorance of Chriſt and of the true life of faith in him, miſerably ſuperſeded by ceremonies and ſuperſtitions.—All theſe things are divinely delineated in the ſecond chapter to the Coloſſians; and, ſo far as words can do it, the true defence againſt them is powerfully deſcribed and enforced.

The cultivation itſelf of the human mind, when carried on in the beſt manner, is apt to be abuſed, by fallen man to the perverſion of the Goſpel. Yet I would not place the mathematics and natural philoſophy on the ſame footing as the Platonic or Stoical doctrines. In truth, philoſophy is too reſpectable a name for theſe laſt: As they were managed in the ſchool of Ammonius or of Antoninus, they diſplayed little that deſerved the attention of a wiſe man: They were either romantic, or abſolutely falſe. The philoſophy of the moderns, when applied to abſtract quantity, or to the works of nature, is, doubtleſs, poſſeſſed of truth and ſolidity, yet great care is requiſite to keep even modern philoſophy within its due bounds; and to prevent its encroachments on Chriſtianity: and the danger of being elated by pride, and of being made too wiſe for the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, is common to this with all other

other ſorts of ſecular knowledge. In regard to what is called moral philoſophy and metaphyſics, theſe ſeem much more nearly allied to the antient philoſophical evils, and have ever been dangerous to religion: fatal miſtakes have been made through their means; and in general, if we except a very ſmall portion of natural truths which are agreeable to the moral ſenſe and conſcience of mankind, they appear,—at leaſt,—when conducted, as they have uſually been, by un-evangelical perſons,—to be the very ſame ſort of miſchievous ſpeculation and refinement againſt which the apoſtle to the Coloſſians ſpeaks. Certainly his cautions againſt philoſophy are equally applicable to THEM;—for THEY have been found to militate againſt the vital truths of Chriſtianity, and to corrupt the Goſpel in our times as much as the cultivation of the more antient philoſophy corrupted it in early ages.—I would here be underſtood, in both caſes, to refer to matter of fact, and not to imaginary ſuppoſitions.—In fact, the ſyſtems of the moral and metaphyſical writers have rarely been founded on Chriſtian principles, and yet they have pretended to incorporate themſelves with the Goſpel. The effect of ſuch combination muſt ever prove miſchievous, particularly when addreſſed to the reaſon of man, prejudiced by ſelf-conceit and the love of ſin.

And here we cloſe the view of the ſecond century; which, for the moſt part, exhibited proofs of divine grace as ſtrong, or nearly ſo, as the firſt. We have ſeen the ſame unſhaken and ſimple faith of Jeſus, the ſame love of God and of the brethren; and,—that in which they ſingularly excelled modern Chriſtians,—the ſame heavenly ſpirit and victory over the world. But a dark

ſhade

ſhade is enveloping theſe divine glories. The Spirit of God is grieved already by the ambitious intruſions of ſelf-righteouſneſs, argumentative refinements, and Phariſaic pride; and though it be more common to repreſent the moſt ſenſible decay of godlineſs as commencing a century later, to me it ſeems already begun. The ſurviving effects, however, of the firſt effuſion of the Spirit, and alſo the effects of ſome rich additional communications of the ſame Spirit will appear in the third century.

CENTURY III.

CHAP. I.

IRENÆUS.

BEFORE we proceed with the orderly courſe of events in this century, it may be convenient to continue the account of authors who properly belonged to the laſt, though they ſurvived the concluſion of it. We meet with four celebrated characters of this deſcription; Irenæus, Tertullian, Pantænus, and Clement of Alexandria.

Of Irenæus it were to be wiſhed we had a more copious account: The place of his birth is quite uncertain. His name, however, points him out to be a Grecian. His inſtructors in Chriſtianity were Papias, biſhop of Hierapolis, and the renowned Polycarp. The former is generally allowed to have been a man of real ſanctity, but of ſlender capacity. He, as well as Polycarp, had been a diſciple of St. John; and with all the imbecility of judgment which is aſcribed to him, might, under God, have been of ſignal ſervice to Irenæus. The inſtructions of Polycarp, however, ſeem to have made the deepeſt impreſſions on his mind from early life.

The church of Lyons, we have ſeen, was a daughter of the church of Smyrna, or of the other neighbouring churches. Pothinus, the biſhop, muſt have

been a Greek as well as Irenæus; who, as Preſbyter, aſſiſted the venerable prelate in his old age.

A.D. 169. After the death of Pothinus, about the year 169, Irenæus ſucceeded him. Never was any paſtor more ſeverely tried by a tempeſtuous ſcene. Violent perſecution without, and ſubtil hereſies within, called for the exertion, at once, of conſummate dexterity and of magnanimous reſolution. Irenæus was favoured with a large meaſure of both; and he weathered out the ſtorm. But hereſy proved a more conſtant enemy than perſecution. The multiplication of it, in endleſs refinements, induced him to write his book againſt hereſies, which muſt have been at that time a very ſeaſonable work.—His vigour and charity alſo in compoſing the inſignificant diſputes about Eaſter, as well as his concern in writing the account of the martyrdoms of Lyons have already been mentioned.

The beginning of the third century was marked with the perſecution under Septimus Severus, the ſucceſſor of Julian. Severus himſelf had, moſt probably, directed the perſecution at Lyons, in which Pothinus ſuffered; and when he began to perſecute as emperor, he would naturally recall the idea of Lyons, and of the perſecution in which he had had ſo large aſhare. Gregory of Tours, and the antient martyrologiſts inform us, "that after ſeveral torments Irenæus was put to death, and together with him almoſt all the Chriſtians of that populous city, whoſe numbers could not be reckoned, ſo that the ſtreets of Lyons flowed with the blood of Chriſtians." We may eaſily allow that this is a rhetorical exaggeration. Yet I ſee no reaſon with ſome to deny altogether the truth of this ſecond perſecution at Lyons, or of Irenæus ſuffering martyrdom under it. Gregory of Tours is not

not the beſt authority, but there is no circumſtance of improbability here. The ſilence of Euſebius affords no argument to the contrary, becauſe he is far from relating the deaths of all celebrated Chriſtians. Of thoſe in the Weſt particularly, he is by no means copious in his narrative; and the natural cruelty of Severus, added to his former connection with Lyons, gives to the fact a ſtrong degree of credibility.

The labours of Irenæus in Gaul were doubtleſs of the moſt ſolid utility. Nor is it a ſmall inſtance of the humility and charity of this great man,—accurately verſed as he was in Grecian literature,—that he took pains to learn the barbarous dialect of Gaul, conformed himſelf to the ruſtic manners of an illiterate people, and renounced the politeneſs and elegant traits of his own country, for the love of ſouls. Rare fruit of Chriſtian charity! and highly worthy the attention of paſtors in an age like this, in which ſo many undertake to preach Chriſtianity; and yet ſeem little deſirous of diſtinguiſhing themſelves in what peculiarly belongs to their office!

His book of hereſies is nearly the whole of his writings that have eſcaped the injuries of time. His aſſiduity and penetration are equally remarkable in analyzing and diſſecting all the fanciful ſchemes, with which heretics had diſgraced the Chriſtian name. It is eaſy to notice that his views of the Goſpel are of the ſame caſt as thoſe of Juſtin *, whom he quotes, and with whoſe works he appears to have been acquainted. Like him he is ſilent, or nearly ſo, on the election of grace; which from the inſtructors of his early age he muſt often have heard: And, like him, he defends the Arminian notion of free-will; and by ſimilar arguments.

* B. 4 C. 14.

arguments *. His philoſophy ſeems to have had its uſual influence on the mind,—in darkening ſome truths of Scripture, and in mixing the doctrine of Chriſt with human inventions.

There is not much of pathetic, practical, or experimental religion in the work. The plan of the author, which led him to keep up a conſtant attention to ſpeculative errors, did not admit it. Yet, there is every where ſo ſerious and grave a ſpirit; and now and then ſuch diſplays of godlineſs, as ſhew him very capable of writing what might have been ſingularly uſeful to the Church in all ages.

He makes a ſtrong uſe of the argument of tradition in ſupport of the apoſtolical doctrine againſt the novel hereſies. His acquaintance with primitive Chriſtians juſtified him in preſſing this argument. The force of it, in a certain degree, is obvious, though the papiſts have perverted his declarations in favour of their own church. But what may not men pervert and abuſe? The reaſonable uſe of tradition, as a collateral proof of Chriſtian doctrines, is not hence invalidated. What he obſerves here concerning the barbarous nations is remarkable †. —"If there were any doubt concerning the leaſt article,—ought we not to have recourſe to the moſt ancient churches where the apoſtles lived? What—if the apoſtles had left us no writings whatever? Ought we not to follow the tradition which they left with thoſe to whom they committed the care of the churches? It is what ſeveral barbarous nations do, who believe in Jeſus without paper or ink, having the

* B. 4. C. 72.—Quia in nobis ſit, ſeems equivalent to Juſtin's αυτεξουσια

† B. 3. C. 4.—See Fleury's Church Hiſtory on the Subject of the Works of the Fathers, Vol. 1. B. 4.

the doctrine of ſalvation written on their hearts by the Holy Ghoſt, and faithfully keeping up to ancient tradition concerning one God the Creator and his Son Jeſus Chriſt. Thoſe, who have received this faith without Scripture, are barbarians as to their manner of ſpeaking, compared with us; but as to their ſentiments and behaviour, they are very wiſe and very acceptable to God; and they perſevere in the practice of juſtice and charity. And if any one ſhould preach to them in their language, what the heretics have invented, they would immediately ſtop their ears and flee far off, and would not even hear thoſe blaſphemies."

Thus, it appears, that to the illiterate barbarians tradition, though a poor ſubſtitute, ſupplied the place of the written word. We may not, however, ſuppoſe that their faith was blind and implicit. Our author gives a ſtrong teſtimony to their godlineſs; and thoſe of them who were taught indeed of God would have in themſelves the ſtrongeſt and moſt reaſonable of all proofs of the divinity of their religion.—This is a valuable evidence of the Holy Spirit's influences, and of the native energy of divine truth on the hearts and lives of very illiterate men.

There is no new thing under the ſun:—The artifices of the Valentinians in alluring men to their communion are ſpecimens of the wiles of heretics in all ages.—"In * public," ſays Irenæus, "they uſe alluring diſcourſes, becauſe of the common Chriſtians, as they call thoſe who wear the Chriſtian name in general; and to entice them to come often, they pretend to preach like us: and they complain that, though their doctrine be the ſame as ours, we abſtain from their communion, and call them heretics. When they have ſeduced any

* B. 3. C. 15.

any perſons from the faith by their diſputes, and made them willing to comply, they then begin to open their heretical myſteries."

He doubtleſs agrees with all the primitive Chriſtians in the doctrine of the Trinity: He makes uſe of the forty-fifth pſalm particularly to prove the Deity of Jeſus Chriſt. He is no leſs clear and ſound in his views of the incarnation*: and, in general, notwithſtanding ſome philoſophical adulterations, he certainly maintained all the eſſentials of the Goſpel.

The uſe of the myſtic union between the Godhead and manhood of Chriſt in the work of redemption; and, in general, the doctrine of the FALL and of the RECOVERY, are ſcarcely held out more inſtructively by any writer of antiquity. The learned reader, who has a taſte for what is peculiarly Chriſtian, will not be diſpleaſed to ſee a few quotations †.

"He united man to God: For if man had not overcome the adverſary of man, the enemy could not, according to the plan of God's juſtice, have been effectually overcome.—And again, if God had not granted ſalvation, we ſhould not have been put into firm poſſeſſion of it; and if man had not been united to God, he could not have been a partaker of immortality. It behoved then the Mediator between God and man, by his affinity with both, to bring both into agreement with each other."

"The ‡ Word of God, all-powerful and perfect in righteouſneſs, juſtly ſet himſelf againſt the apoſtacy, redeeming his own property from Satan, who had born rule over us from the beginning, and had inſatiably made rapine of what was not his own;—and this redemption was effected not by violence; but the Lord redeemed us with his own blood,

* C. 6. B. v. 15. † B. 3, 20. ‡ L. 5. C 1.

blood, and gave his life for our life, and his fleſh for our fleſh, and ſo effected our ſalvation."

He beautifully expreſſes our recovery in Chriſt*. "Our Lord would not have gathered together theſe things to himſelf; and have ſaved through himſelf in the end what had periſhed in the beginning through Adam, if he had not actually been made fleſh and blood. He, therefore, had fleſh and blood, not of a kind different from what men have; but he gathered into himſelf the very original creation of the Father, and ſought that which was loſt†."

Undoubtedly the intelligent ſcriptural reader will recollect the divine reaſoning of the author to the Hebrews to be very ſimilar to all this. And thoſe, who ſee how well the views of Irenæus are ſupported by him, will know how to judge of the opinions of thoſe who call this ſcholaſtic theology, will ſee alſo how accurately the primitive fathers underſtood and maintained the doctrines now deemed fanatical, and, laſtly, will obſerve the propriety of being zealous for Chriſtian peculiarities.—Another ſhort extract ſhall conclude this account of the book of hereſies.

"The Word of God, Jeſus Chriſt, on account of his immenſe love, became what we are, that he might make us what he is‡."

Of the few fragments of this author there is nothing that ſeems to deſerve any peculiar attention, except that of an epiſtle to Florinus, whom he had known in early life, and of whom he had hoped better things than thoſe into which he was afterwards ſeduced. "Theſe doctrines," ſays he, "thoſe who were Preſbyters before us,—thoſe who had

* Ανακιφαλαιωσις. Eph. i. 10.—See Dr. Owen's Preface to his "Χριστολογια."

† B. 5. C. 14. ‡ Book 5. Preface.

had walked with the apoſtles, did not deliver to you. For I ſaw you, when I was a boy, in the lower Aſia, with Polycarp; and you were then, though a perſon of rank in the emperor's ſervice, very deſirous of being approved by him. I chooſe rather to mention things that happened at that time than facts of a later date. The inſtructions of our childhood, grow with our growth, and adhere to us moſt cloſely, ſo that I can deſcribe the very ſpot in which Polycarp ſat and expounded, and his coming in and going out, and the very manner of his life, and the figure of his body, and the ſermons which he preached to the multitude, and how he related to us his converſe with John and with the reſt of thoſe who had ſeen the Lord, how he mentioned their particular expreſſions, and what things he had heard from them of the Lord, and of his miracles and of his doctrine. As Polycarp had received from the eye-witneſſes of the Word of Life, he told us all things agreeable to the Scriptures. Theſe things then, through the mercy of God viſiting me, I heard with ſerioufneſs; I wrote them not on paper, but on my heart; and ever ſince, through the grace of God, I have a genuine remembrance of them, and I can witneſs before God, that if that bleſſed apoſtolical Preſbyter had heard SOME of the doctrines which are now maintained, he would have cried out and ſtopped his ears, and in his uſual manner have ſaid, "O good God, to what times haſt thou reſerved me, that I ſhould endure theſe things!" And he would immediately have fled from the place in which he had heard ſuch doctrines."

How ſuperficially, in this age, which calls itſelf enlightened, numbers are content to think on religious matters, appears from the ſatisfaction with which two confuſed lines of a certain author, great indeed

indeed as a poet, but very ill informed in religion, are conſtantly quoted:

> For modes of faith let graceleſs zealots fight;—
> His can't be wrong whoſe life is in the right.

Proud and ſelf-ſufficient men, to whom theſe lines appear full of oracular wiſdom, may, if they pleaſe, pronounce Irenæus a "graceleſs zealot." But thoſe in every age, to whom evangelical truth appears of real importance, will regret that ſo little of this zeal, "IN EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS," diſcovers itſelf in our times:—They will regret, I ſay, this want of zeal, becauſe they think it abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve practical as well as theoretical Chriſtianity in the world.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

TERTULLIAN.

WE have not yet had any occaſion to take notice of the ſtate of Chriſtianity in the Roman province of Africa. This whole region, once the ſcene of Carthaginian greatneſs, abounded with Chriſtians in the ſecond century, though of the manner of the introduction of the Goſpel and of the proceedings of its firſt planters we have no account. In the latter part of the ſecond, and in the former part of the third century there flouriſhed at Carthage the famous Tertullian, the firſt Latin writer of the Church whoſe works are come down to us. Yet, were it not for ſome light which he throws on the ſtate of Chriſtianity in his own times, he would ſcarcely deſerve to be diſtinctly noticed. I have ſeldom ſeen ſo large a collection of tracts, all profeſſedly on Chriſtian ſubjects, containing ſo little matter of uſeful inſtruction. The very firſt tract in the volume, namely, that de Pallio, ſhews the littleneſs of his views. The dreſs of the Roman TOGA offended him: he exhorted Chriſtians to wear the PALLIUM, a more vulgar and ruſtic kind of garment, and therefore more becoming their religion. All his writings betray the ſame ſour, monaſtic, harſh, and ſevere turn of mind.—"* Touch not, taſte not, handle not," might ſeem to have been the maxims of his religious conduct. The Apoſtle Paul, in the chapter alluded to, warns Chriſtians againſt "will-worſhip and voluntary humility,"

* Coloſſ. xi.

humility," and ſhews that while the fleſh outwardly appears to be humbled, it is inwardly puffed up by theſe things, and induced to forſake the Head, Chriſt Jeſus. This ſubtil ſpirit of ſelf-righteouſneſs may, in all likelihood, in Tertullian's time, have very much overſpread the African church;—otherwiſe his writings would ſcarcely have rendered him ſo celebrated amongſt them.

All his religious ideas ſeem tinged deeply with the ſame train of thinking: his treatiſe of repentance is meagre and diſmal throughout; and while it enlarges on outward things, and recommends proſtration of our bodies before the prieſts, is very ſlight on the eſſential ſpirit of repentance itſelf.

A Chriſtian ſoldier, who had refuſed to wear a crown of laurel which his commander had given him with the reſt of his regiment, was puniſhed for the diſobedience, and was alſo blamed by the Chriſtians of thoſe times, becauſe his conduct had a tendency to irritate needleſsly the reigning powers. I am apt to think that he might have worn it as innocently as St. Paul committed himſelf to a ſhip whoſe ſign was Caſtor and Pollux. It was a military ornament merely, and could no more be ſaid to have any connection with idolatry than almoſt every cuſtom of civil life muſt have had at that time. The Apoſtle, I think, would have concurred in diſapproving the ſoldier's want of obedience to his lawful ſuperiors: and he might have referred Chriſtians to his own determination in the caſe of eating things ſacrificed to idols,—"Eat of ſuch things as they ſet before you, aſking no queſtions for conſcience ſake." But Tertullian decides on the other ſide of the queſtion, and applauds the diſobedience of the ſoldier. His reaſons are diſhonourable to his underſtanding. He owns that there is no Scripture to be found againſt

againſt compliance in this caſe. Tradition, he thinks, a ſufficient reaſon for contumacy: and then he proceeds to relate ſome traditional cuſtoms maintained in the African churches, among which the very frequent ſigning of themſelves with the ſign of the croſs is one.

Superſtition had made, it ſeems, deep inroads into Africa. It was rather an unpoliſhed region;—certainly much inferior to Italy in point of civilization. Satan's temptations are ſuited to tempers and ſituations. But ſurely it was not by ſuperſtitious practices that the glad tidings of ſalvation had been firſt introduced into Africa.—There muſt have been a deep decline.—One of the ſtrongeſt proofs that the comparative value of the Chriſtian religion in different countries is not to be eſtimated by their diſtance from the apoſtolic age, is deducible from the times of Tertullian.—If my life be ſpared, that I may proceed with this hiſtory, we ſhall ſee Africa exhibit a much more pleaſing ſpectacle.

All this man's caſuiſtical determinations ſavour of the ſame aſperity. He approved not of flight in perſecution,—in direct contradiction to our Saviour's determination*. He takes notice of a martyr named Rutilius; who, having fled ſeveral times from place to place to avoid perſecution, and ſaved himſelf by money, was ſuddenly ſeized, and carried before the Governor, when he thought himſelf ſecure. He adds, that he finiſhed his martyrdom by fire, having undergone ſeveral torments.

I had much rather quote Tertullian as an hiſtorian than a reaſoner.—We may make uſeful reflections on this fact, without concerning ourſelves with the inferences of the writer.

He diſapproved alſo,—at leaſt after his ſeparation from the Church,—of ſecond marriages, and called

* Matthew x. 23.

called them ADULTERY. For as he does not appear to have been much acquainted with the depravity, miſery, and imbecility of human nature, moſt of his precepts carry rather a ſtoical than a Chriſtian appearance. He was, in his own diſpoſition, doubtleſs a man of great natural fortitude; and moſt probably of great ſtrength of body: He lived to an advanced age.—He ſeems not to have had any thing of that ſympathy with the weak and timid, which forms ſo beautiful a part of the Chriſtian character. The Church in general was not ſevere enough, according to his ideas of diſcipline; yet, it muſt be confeſſed, they were by no means wanting in that reſpect. In our licentious times, when ſloth and diſſipation,—the very oppoſite extremes to thoſe which pleaſed the genius of Tertullian,—abound, all, who love the ways of Chriſt, regret that diſcipline is at ſo low an ebb.

The Montaniſts, whoſe auſterities were extreme, and whoſe enthuſiaſm was real, ſeduced at length our ſevere African; and he not only joined them, but wrote in their defence, and treated the body of Chriſtians, from whom he ſeparated, with much contempt.—I have the ſatisfaction, however, as yet to find, that the largeſt body of Chriſtians, ſo called, was the ſoundeſt.

Tertullian, we are told, reſented certain treatment which he met with from ſome Roman Chriſtians. But of this I know no particulars; only, that an accident of this ſort is ſaid to have influenced his ſeceſſion from the Church. Error, however, is very inconſtant: He, afterwards left the Montaniſts either entirely, or nearly ſo; and formed a ſect of his own, called Tertullianiſts, who continued in Africa till Auguſtin's time, by whoſe labours their exiſtence, as a diſtinct body, was brought to a cloſe. The character of Tertullian is very ſtrongly delineated by

by himſelf in his own writings; if there had been any thing peculiarly Chriſtian, which he had learnt from the Montaniſts, his works muſt have ſhewn it: but they are all of the ſame uniformly ſable complexion: nor does he ſeem to have increaſed in any thing but in ſeverity.

It is but an unpleaſing picture which truth has obliged me to draw of this author. One agreeable circumſtance, however, attending his hiſtory is this;—It was not on account of any fundamental error in principle, that he left the Church. The faith of Chriſt, and the practice of real godlineſs exiſted there, beyond doubt, to a much greater degree than amongſt the heretics of thoſe times, though it be allowed and hoped, as it ought to be, that ſome good perſons might belong to them. The abilities of Tertullian, as an orator and a ſcholar, are far from being contemptible; and have, doubtleſs, given him a reputation to which he is by no means entitled on account of his theological knowledge. Yet the man appears always ſerious and earneſt; and, therefore, much more eſtimable than thouſands who would take a pleaſure in deſpiſing him, while they themſelves are covered with prophaneneſs. Nor is it for us, after all, to condemn a perſon, who certainly honoured Chriſt, defended ſeveral fundamental Chriſtian doctrines, took large pains in ſupporting what he took to be true religion, and ever meant to ſerve God. He might even in his latter days, if not before, be favoured with that humbling and transforming knowledge of Chriſt which would fit him for the enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven.—Superſtition and enthuſiaſm are compatible with real godlineſs: prophaneneſs is not ſo.—It were to be wiſhed, that thoſe, who are moſt concerned in this remark, were more diſpoſed to attend to it than they generally are.

In his treatiſe againſt Praxeas, he appears to have had very clear and ſound views of the doctrine of the Trinity. He ſpeaks of the Trinity in Unity, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, yet one God." He ſpeaks of the Lord Jeſus as both God and man, ſon of man and ſon of God, and called Jeſus Chriſt. He ſpeaks alſo of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the ſanctifier of the faith of thoſe who believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He obſerves "that this rule of faith had obtained from the beginning of the Goſpel, antecedent to any former heretics, much more to Praxeas, who was of yeſterday." To thoſe who know the primitive times I need not ſay, that Tertullian's own hereſy leſſens not the credibility of his teſtimony to theſe things.—His Montaniſm altered not in the leaſt his view of the Trinity.

The hereſy of Praxeas conſiſted in making the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all one and the ſame: and this notion is no other than what has ſince been better known by the name of Sabellianiſm. In this way the diſtinction of perſons in the Godhead is denied; and no doubt the myſtery of the Trinity removed; but then what becomes of the Divine Revelation itſelf?—All attempts to ſubvert the faith of Scripture, on this ſubject, labour under the ſame error, namely, a deſire to accommodate divine truths to our narrow reaſoning faculties:—let men learn to ſubmit; and on no account attempt to ſtrip the Almighty of his attribute of Incomprehenſibility! Tertullian informs us,—that Praxeas firſt brought this evil from Aſia into the Roman world; and that he ſeduced many; but at laſt was confuted and ſilenced by "*an inſtrument whom God pleaſed to make uſe of:—and the evil appeared

* A modeſt periphraſis, I apprehend, denoting Tertullian himſelf.

appeard to be eradicated." Even Praxeas himſelf had the ingenuouſneſs to retract his miſtake, and his hand-writing ſtill remains among the natural men —ſo Tertullian calls the Chriſtians in general from whom he had ſeparated;—and he no more revived his hereſy. Others revived it afterward, which occaſioned the treatiſe whence I have extracted this brief account.

In his apology, the eloquence and argumentative powers of our author appear moſt conſpicuous. He refutes, in the uſual manner, the ſtale heathen calumnies of Chriſtians feeding on infants. Their remarkable power over demons he ſtates in the ſame manner as various of the fathers have done. —As a proof of the unity of the Godhead, he appeals to the conſciences of mankind, and to a common practice, even among idolaters, founded on the ſuppoſition of ONE GOD. His deſcription is remarkably ſtriking.—"What God hath given," "God ſees it,"—and "I recommend to God," and "God will reſtore to me:" "Theſe," ſays he, "are univerſal modes of ſpeaking and of appealing to the ONE SUPREME." O teſtimony of the ſoul, naturally in favour of Chriſtianity!—When men ſeriouſly pronounce theſe words, they look not to the Capitol at Rome, but to Heaven above. For the ſoul knows the ſeat of the living God, whence it had its own origin."—I ſcarce remember a finer obſervation made by any author in favour both of the natural voice of conſcience and of the patriarchal tradition of true religion; for both may fairly be ſuppoſed concerned in the ſupport of this practice. It ſhews how difficult it was for Satan to eradicate entirely every veſtige of truth; and every claſſical reader may obſerve how common it is for the Pagan writers to ſpeak of God as one, when they are moſt ſerious; and inſtantly to

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ſlide into the vulgar polytheiſm when they begin to trifle.

This apology exhibits a beautiful view of the manners and ſpirit of the Chriſtians of his time; and ſhews what real Chriſtianity does for men.—The following paſſages merit particular attention.—"We pray," ſays he, "for the ſafety of the emperors to the eternal God, the true, the living God, whom emperors themſelves would deſire to be propitious to them above all others who are called gods. We, looking up to heaven, with out-ſtretched hands becauſe they are harmleſs, with naked heads becauſe we are not aſhamed, without a prompter becauſe we pray from the heart, conſtantly pray for all emperors, that they may have a long life, a ſecure empire, a ſafe palace, ſtrong armies, a faithful ſenate, a well-moralized people, a quiet ſtate of the world,—whatever Cæſar would wiſh for himſelf in his publick and private capacity. I cannot ſolicit theſe things from any other than from Him from whom, I know, I ſhall obtain them, becauſe he alone can do theſe things, and I am he who may expect them of him, being his ſervant, who worſhip him alone, and am ready to loſe my life for his ſervice. Thus then let the claws of wild beaſts pierce us, or their feet trample on us, while our hands are ſtretched out to God; let croſſes ſuſpend us, let fires conſume us, let ſwords pierce our breaſts,—a praying Chriſtian is in a frame for enduring any thing. How is this—ye generous rulers?—Will ye kill the good ſubject who ſupplicates God for the emperor? Were we diſpoſed to return evil for evil, it were eaſy for us to revenge the injuries which we ſuſtain. But God forbid that his people ſhould vindicate themſelves by human fire; or be reluctant to endure that by which their ſincerity is evinced.

Were we diſpoſed to act the part, I will not ſay, of ſecret aſſaſſins, but of open enemies, ſhould we want forces and numbers? Are there not multitudes of us in every part of the world? It is true we are but of yeſterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, iſlands, caſtles, boroughs, counſels, camps, courts, palaces, ſenate, forum:—WE LEAVE YOU ONLY YOUR TEMPLES.—For what war ſhould we not be ready and well prepared, even though unequal in numbers; we,—who die with ſo much pleaſure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to ſuffer death than to inflict it?—If we were to make a general ſeceſſion from your dominions, you would be aſtoniſhed at your ſolitude.—We are dead to all ideas of worldly honour and dignity: Nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns: The whole world is our republic.—We are a body united in one bond of religion, diſcipline, and hope. We meet in our aſſemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourſe to the divine oracles for caution and recollection on all occaſions. We nouriſh our faith by the word of God, we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we ſtrengthen our diſcipline by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, and by excommunication, when it is needful. This laſt, as being in the ſight of God, is of great weight; and is a ſerious warning of the future judgment, if any one behave in ſo ſcandalous a manner as to be debarred from holy communion. Thoſe, who preſide among us, are elderly perſons, not diſtinguiſhed for opulence, but worthineſs of character. Every one pays ſomething into the public cheſt once a month, or when he pleaſes, and according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulſion. Theſe gifts are, as it were, the depoſits of piety. Hence we relieve

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and bury the needy, ſupport orphans and decrepid perſons, thoſe who have ſuffered ſhipwreck, and thoſe who, for the word of God, are condemned to the mines, or impriſonment. This very charity of ours has cauſed us to be noticed by ſome;—See, ſay they, how they love one another."

He afterwards takes notice of the extreme readineſs with which Chriſtians paid the taxes to the exiſting government, in oppoſition to the ſpirit of fraud and deceit, with which ſo many acted in theſe matters. But I muſt not enlarge;—the reader may form an idea of the purity, integrity, heavenly-mindedneſs, and paſſiveneſs under injuries, for which the firſt Chriſtians were ſo juſtly renowned. The effect of that glorious effuſion of the divine Spirit was the production of this meek and charitable conduct in external things: Every evidence that can be deſired is given to evince the truth of this relation:—The *confeſſion of enemies unites here with the relations of friends.

I ſhall cloſe the account of Tertullian with a few facts taken from his Addreſs to Scapula, the perſecuting governor, without any remarks.

"Claudius Herminianus, in Cappadocia, was vexed becauſe his wife was become a ſervant of Chriſt, and for that reaſon he treated the Chriſtians cruelly.—Being eaten with worms, "Let no one," ſays he, "know it, leſt the Chriſtians rejoice." Afterward, convinced of his error in having, by force of torments, cauſed perſons to abjure Chriſtianity, he died almoſt a Chriſtian himſelf.

At Thiſtrum Cincius Severus himſelf taught Chriſtians how to anſwer ſo as to obtain their diſmiſſion.

Aſper, having moderately tortured a perſon and brought him to ſubmit, would not compel him to ſacrifice;

* See the foregoing account of Peregrinus, page 280.

ſacrifice; and he made a public declaration among the advocates, "that he was grieved that he had had any thing to do with ſuch a cauſe."

The emperor Severus himſelf was, in one part of his life, kind to the Chriſtians. Proculus, a Chriſtian, had cured him of a diſorder by the uſe of a certain oil; and he kept him in his palace to his death. This man was well known to Caracalla, the ſucceſſor of Severus, whoſe nurſe was a Chriſtian. Even ſome perſons of the higheſt quality, of both ſexes, were openly commended and protected by Severus againſt the raging populace.

Arrius Antoninus, in Aſia, perſecuted ſo vehemently, that all the Chriſtians of the ſtate, preſented themſelves in a body: He ordered a few of them to be put to death, and diſmiſſed the reſt, ſaying, "If you wiſh to die, wretched men, ye may find precipices and halters."

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

PANTÆNUS.

ONE of the moſt reſpectable cities within the precincts of the Roman empire was Alexandria, the metropolis of Egypt. Here the Goſpel had been planted by St. Mark; and, from the conſiderable ſucceſs which had attended it in moſt capital towns, it is probable that many perſons were converted. But of the firſt paſtors of this Church, and of the work of God among them, we have no account. Our more diſtinct information begins with what is evil. The Platonic philoſophers ruled the taſte of this city, which piqued itſelf on its ſuperior erudition. Ammonius Saccas had, as we have ſeen, reduced there the notions of the learned into a ſyſtem, which pretended to embrace all ſorts of ſentiments; and his ſucceſſors, for ſeveral ages, followed his plan. We are told, that from St. Mark's time, a Chriſtian catechetical ſchool was ſupported in Alexandria. Whether it be ſo or not, Pantænus is the firſt maſter of it of whom we have any account. It ſhould ſeem from a paſſage of Euſebius*, that he was an Hebrew by deſcent. By tradition he had received the true doctrine from Peter, James, John, and Paul; and, no doubt, he deſerved this teſtimony of Euſebius, notwithſtanding the unhappy mixture of philoſophy which he imbibed in this region. For Pantænus was much addicted to the ſect of the Stoics, a ſort of romantic pretenders to perfection, which

* B. 5. C. 10.

which doctrine flattered human pride, but was, ſurely, ill adapted to our natural imbecility and to ſcriptural views of innate depravity. The combination of Stoiciſm with Chriſtianity in the ſyſtem of Pantænus muſt have very much debaſed the ſacred truths; and we may be aſſured that thoſe who were diſpoſed to follow implicitly the dictates of ſuch an inſtructor, muſt have been furniſhed by him with a clouded light of the Goſpel;—ſtill, it is not improbable but that many of the ſimple and illiterate Chriſtians might happily eſcape the infection, and preſerve, unadulterated, the genuine ſimplicity of the faith of Chriſt:—The bait of reaſoning pride lies more in the way of the learned; and, in all ages, they are more prone to be caught by it.

Pantænus always retained the title of the Stoic philoſoper, after he had been admitted to eminent employments in the Chriſtian church*. For ten years he laborioufly diſcharged the office of Catechiſt, and freely taught all that deſired him: whereas the ſchool of his predeceſſors had been more private.

Certain Indian ambaſſadors,—it is not eaſy to determine from what part of India they came,—intreated Demetrius, then biſhop of Alexandria, to ſend them ſome worthy perſon to preach the faith of Jeſus in their country. Pantænus was choſen; and the hardſhips he muſt have endured were, doubtleſs, great. But there were at that time † many Evangeliſts, who had the apoſtolical ſpirit to propagate the faith at the hazard of their lives. And, as Pantænus very freely complied with this call, we have here one of the beſt proofs of his being poſſeſſed of the ſpirit of the Goſpel. His labours among ignorant Indians, where neither fame, nor eaſe, nor profit were attainable, appear to me much more ſubſtantial

* Cave's Life of Pantænus. † Euſeb. B. 5. C. 9.

tial proofs of his godlineſs, than any which can be drawn from his catechetical employments at Alexandria. The former would oblige him to attend chiefly to Chriſtian fundamentals, and could afford little opportunity of indulging the philoſophic ſpirit. We are told he found in India the Goſpel of St. Matthew, which had been carried thither by the Apoſtle Bartholomew, who had firſt preached amongſt them.—I mention this, but much doubt the truth of it.—Of the particular ſucceſs of his labours we have no account: He lived to return to Alexandria, and reſumed his catechetical office. He died not long after the commencement of the third century. He wrote but little: Some Commentaries on the Scriptures are all that are mentioned as his, and of them not a fragment remains.

Candour, I think, requires us to look on him as a ſincere Chriſtian,—whoſe fruitfulneſs was yet much checked by that very philoſophy for which Euſebius ſo highly commends him.—A blaſting wind it ſurely was; but it did not entirely deſtroy Chriſtian vegetation in all whom it infected.—Let us now turn our eyes to his diſciple, from whom we may collect more clearly what the Maſter was, becauſe we have more evidence concerning him.—But the Chriſtian reader muſt be prepared to expect a declenſion in divine things, in the ſtate of the Church before us.

CHAP. IV.

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS.

HE was, by his own confeſſion, a ſcholar of Pantænus, and of the ſame philoſophical caſt of mind. He was of the eclectic ſect. It is ſincerely to be regretted that Clemens had any acquaintance with them: for ſo far as he mixed their notions with Chriſtianity, ſo far he tarniſhed it: and though we may admit, that by his zeal, activity, learning, and reputation, he did good to many in inſtructing and inducing them to receive the fundamentals of the divine religion, it is nevertheleſs not to be denied that he clouded the pure light of the Goſpel:—Let us hear himſelf: "*I eſpouſe neither this nor that philoſophy, neither the Stoic, nor the Platonic, nor the Epicurean, nor that of Ariſtotle; but whatever any of theſe ſects hath ſaid, that is fit and juſt; whatever teaches righteouſneſs with a divine and religious knowledge, all this I ſelect; and call it philoſophy."

Is it not hence very evident, that from the time that this philoſophizing ſpirit had entered into the Church through Juſtin, it had procured to itſelf a reſpect to which its merit no way intitled it? For what is there even of good ethics in all the philoſophers, which Clement might not have learnt in the New Teſtament; and much more perfectly, and without the danger of pernicious adulterations?

* Strom. L. 1. See Cave's Life of Clemens.

tions? Doubtleſs many valuable purpoſes are anſwered by an acquaintance with theſe writers;—but to dictate to us in religion, Clement ſhould have known, was no part of THEIR buſineſs.—"The world by wiſdom knew not God;"—"Beware of philoſophy." The Chriſtian world was now gradually learning to neglect theſe Scriptural cautions, and divine knowledge is certainly much too high a term for any human doctrine whatever.

He ſucceeded his maſter Pantænus in the catechetical ſchool, and under him were bred the famous Origen, Alexander biſhop of Jeruſalem, and other eminent men. I read the following paſſage of Clemens with no pleaſure,—"As the huſbandman firſt waters the ſoil, and then caſts in his ſeed, ſo the notions which I derive out of the writings of the Gentiles ſerve firſt to water and ſoften the earthy parts of the ſoul, that the ſpiritual ſeed may be the better caſt in, and take vital root in the minds of men."

This, certainly, is not a Chriſtian dialect: The Apoſtles neither placed gentile philoſophy in the foundation, nor believed that it would at all aſſiſt in raiſing the ſuperſtructure of Chriſtianity. On the contrary, they looked on the philoſophical religion of their own times as ſo much rubbiſh; but, in all ages, the blandiſhments of mere reaſon on ſuch ſubjects deceive us;—"VAIN MAN WOULD BE WISE."

Beſides his employments in the office of Catechiſt, he was made Preſbyter in the Church of Alexandria. During the perſecution under Severus moſt probably, he viſited the Eaſt and had a peculiar intimacy with Alexander biſhop of Jeruſalem, who ſeems to have been a holy man. This laſt ſuffered impriſonment for the faith; and in that ſituation he wrote a letter to the Church of Antioch,

Antioch, which was conveyed by Clemens. Something of the ſpirit of Chriſtianity appears in the fragment of this letter. "Alexander, a ſervant of God, and a priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt, to the bleſſed Church at Antioch, in the Lord, greeting. Our Lord has made my bonds, in this time of my impriſonment, light and eaſy to me; while I underſtood that Aſclepiades, a perſon admirably qualified by his eminency in the faith, was, by divine providence, become biſhop of your holy Church of Antioch. Theſe letters, brethren, I have ſent you by Clemens the bleſſed Preſbyter, a man of approved integrity, whom ye both do know already and ſhall ſtill further know: He hath been here with us according to the good will of God, and hath much eſtabliſhed and augmented the Church of Chriſt." From Jeruſalem Clemens went to Antioch, and afterwards returned to his charge at Alexandria.—The time of his death is uncertain.

The myſtic philoſophy, to which he was ſo much addicted, would naturally darken his views of ſome of the moſt precious truths of the Goſpel. In particular, the doctrine of juſtification by faith in Jeſus Chriſt will always ſuffer from a connexion of this kind: Human philoſophical doctrines admit no righteouſneſs but what is a man's own.—There is, however notwithſtanding, good proof of the ſolid piety of this learned man. Little is known of his life; but his religious taſte and ſpirit may be collected from his writings.

His exhortations * to the gentiles is a diſcourſe written to convert the Pagans from their religion, and perſuade them to embrace that of Jeſus Chriſt. In the beginning of it he ſhews what a difference there is between the deſign of Jeſus Chriſt, and that

* Dupin Clement.

that of Orpheus, and of thoſe ancient muſicians who were the authors of idolatry. "Theſe captivated men by the ſweetneſs of their muſic with a view of rendering them miſerable ſlaves to idols; and of making them like the very beaſts, the ſtocks, the ſtones, which they adored;—whereas Jeſus Chriſt, who, from all eternity, was the Word of God, always had a compaſſionate tenderneſs for men, and at laſt took their nature upon him, to free them from the ſlavery of Demons, to open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, to guide their paths in the way of righteouſneſs, to deliver them from death and hell, and to beſtow on them everlaſting life, and to put them into a capacity of living a heavenly life here upon earth; and, laſtly, God made himſelf man to teach man to be like unto God." He ſhews them, that eternal ſalvation cannot otherwiſe be expected, and that eternal torments cannot otherwiſe be avoided, than by believing in Jeſus Chriſt, and by living conformably to his laws. "If you were permitted," ſays he, "to purchaſe eternal ſalvation, what would you not give for it? And now you may obtain it by faith and love;—there is nothing can hinder you from acquiring it;—neither poverty, nor miſery, nor old age, nor any ſtate of life. Believe, therefore, in one God, who is God and man, and receive eternal ſalvation for a recompence.—Seek God, and you ſhall live for ever."

The candid Chriſtian ſees that the fundamentals of the Goſpel are actually here, though not laid down in the cleareſt and happieſt manner. * In his Pædagogue he deſcribes the WORD INCARNATE as the inſtructor of men; and ſays, "that he performs his functions by forgiving our ſins as he is God, and by inſtructing us he as is man, with great

* Du Pin.

great ſweetneſs and love: — He equally inſtructs all ſorts, becauſe, in one ſenſe, all are children: yet we muſt not look on Chriſtian doctrines as childiſh and contemptible: on the contrary, the quality of CHILDREN, which we receive in baptiſm* —or regeneration,—renders us perfect in the knowledge of divine things, by delivering us from ſins through grace, and by enlightening us with the illumination of faith; ſo that we are at the ſame time both children and men: and the milk with which we are nouriſhed, being both the word and will of God, is very ſolid and ſubſtantial nouriſhment." Theſe appear to be ſome of his beſt ideas of Chriſtianity.

In his Stromata he ſpeaks with his uſual partiality in favour of philoſophy, and ſhews the effect his regard for it had on his own mind, by ſaying that faith is God's gift, but ſo as to depend on our own free-will. His account of the perfect Chriſtian, whom he calls Gnoſticus, is ſullied by ſtoical rhapſodies †.—"He is never angry, and nothing affects him; becauſe he always loves God: He looks upon that time as loſt which he is obliged to ſpend in receiving nouriſhment: He is employed in continual and mental prayer. He is mild, affable, patient, but at the ſame time ſo rigid as not to be tempted; He gives way neither to pleaſure nor to pain."—But enough of theſe views: Pſeudo-religioniſts have ſince his time dealt largely in ſuch reveries, ſo inconſiſtent with that humbling ſenſe of imbecility, and that ſincere conflict againſt the

* The outward ſign and the inward ſpiritual grace, on account of their uſual connexion in the primitive church, are uſed as ſynonymous by a number of primitive writers, which has, unhappily, given occaſion to one of the worſt abuſes, by thoſe who place all grace in form and ceremony only.

† Fleury, B. 4.

the ſin of our nature, which is peculiarly Chriſtian. In truth—if his knowledge of Chriſtian doctrine was really defective, the defect lay in the point of original ſin. Of this HIS philoſophical ſect knew nothing aright; and it muſt be owned he ſpeaks of it in a very confuſed, if not in a contradictory manner. On the whole,—ſuch is the baneful effect of mixing things which will not incorporate,—human inventions with Chriſtian truths,—that this writer, learned, laborious, and ingenious as he was, may ſeem to be far exceeded by many obſcure and illiterate perſons at this day, in true Scriptural knowledge and in the experience of divine things.—That he was, in the main, a truly pious perſon, neither makes this account leſs credible, nor the danger leſs of admitting the peſtilent ſpirit of human ſelf-ſufficiency to dictate in the Chriſtian religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGNS OF SEVERUS AND CARACALLA.

IT ſeemed proper to prefix to the general hiſtory of the third century, the lives of the four perſons, which we have reviewed; partly becauſe they were ſtudious men not very much connected with the public ſtate of Chriſtianity; and partly becauſe the knowledge of their views and taſte in religion may prepare the reader to expect that unhappy mixture of philoſophical ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſuperſtition, which much clouded and depraved the pure light of the Goſpel in this century.

Severus, though in his younger days a bitter perſecutor of Chriſtians at Lyons, was yet, through the influence of the kindneſs which he had received from Proculus, favourably diſpoſed toward the Chriſtians for a conſiderable time. It was not till about the tenth year of his reign, which falls
A. D. 202. in with the year two hundred and two, that his native ferocity of temper brake out afreſh, and kindled a very ſevere perſecution againſt the Chriſtians, He was juſt returned from the Eaſt victorious: and the pride of proſperity induced him to forbid the propagation of the Goſpel. Chriſtians ſtill thought it right to obey God rather than man. Severus perſiſted; and exerciſed the uſual cruelties. The perſecution raged every where; but particularly at Alexandria. From various parts

parts of Egypt the Chriſtians were brought thither to ſuffer; and they expired in torments. Leonidas, father of the famous Origen, was allowed to be beheaded: His ſon was then very young; but the account, which is given of him by Euſebius *, deſerves our notice.

Lætus was at that time governor of Alexandria and of the reſt of Egypt; and Demetrius had been recently elected biſhop of the Chriſtians in that city. Great numbers now ſuffering martyrdom, young Origen panted for the honour, and needleſsly expoſed himſelf to danger. His mother checked the imprudent zeal at firſt by earneſt entreaties; but perceiving that he ſtill was bent on ſuffering with his father, who at that time was cloſely confined, ſhe very properly exerciſed her motherly authority by confining him to the houſe, and by hiding from him all his apparel. The vehement ſpirit of Origen prompted him, when he could do nothing elſe, to write a letter to his father, in which he thus exhorted him, "Father, faint not, and don't be concerned on our account." He had been carefully trained in the ſtudy of the Scriptures under the inſpection of his pious father, who, together with the ſtudy of the liberal arts, had particularly ſuperintended this moſt important part of education. Before he introduced his ſon to any material exerciſes in profane learning, he inſtructed him in the Scriptures, and gave him daily a certain taſk out of them to repeat. The penetrating genius of Origen led him, in the courſe of his employment, to inveſtigate the ſenſe of Scripture, and to aſk his father queſtions beyond his ability to ſolve. The father checked his curioſity, reminded him of his imbecility, and admoniſhed him to be content with the plain grammatical

* Euſeb. B. 6. C. 1.

tical ſenſe of Scripture, which obviouſly offered itſelf;—but, inwardly rejoiced, it ſeems, that God had given him ſuch a ſon. And it would not have been amiſs, if he had rejoiced WITH TREMBLING;—perhaps he did ſo; and Origen's early loſs of ſuch a father, who, probably, was more ſimple in Chriſtian faith and piety than he himſelf ever was, might be an extreme diſadvantage to him. Youths of great and uncommon parts, accompanied, as is generally the caſe, with much ambition and boundleſs curioſity, have often been the inſtruments of Satan in perverting divine truth: and it is not ſo much attended to as it ought to be by many truly pious and humble ſouls, that the ſuperior eminence, in parts and good ſenſe, of young perſons whom they love and reſpect, is by no means a prognoſtic of the like ſuperiority in real ſpiritual knowledge and the diſcernment of divine things. Men of genius, if they meet with encouragement, will be ſure to diſtinguiſh themſelves in whatever line of life they move. But men of genius and even of very remarkable endowments, though ſincere in Chriſtianity, may, not only in the practice, but even in the perception of Goſpel-truths, be far out-ſtripped by others who are naturally much their inferiors; becauſe the latter are by no means ſo expoſed to the crafts of Satan, are not ſo liable in their judgments to be warped from Chriſtian ſimplicity, are more apt to look for underſtanding from above, and are leſs diſpoſed to lean to an arm of fleſh.

We ſeem to diſcover, in the very beginning of Origen, the foundation of that preſumptuous ſpirit which led him afterwards to philoſophize ſo dangerouſly in the Chriſtian religion, and never to content himſelf with plain truth, but to hunt after ſomething ſingular and extraordinary;—though it muſt be

be acknowledged his ſincere deſire of ſerving God appeared from early life; nor does it ever ſeem to have forſaken him, ſo that he may be conſidered as having been a child of God from early years.

His father dying a martyr, he was left, with his mother and other ſix children, an orphan aged ſeventeen years. His father's ſubſtance was confiſcated by the emperor, and the family reduced to great diſtreſs. But providence gave him a friend in a rich and godly matron, who yet ſupported in her houſe a certain perſon of Antioch, who was noted for hereſy. We cannot at this diſtance of time aſſign her motives; but Origen, though obliged to be in the company of the heretic, could not be prevailed on to join in prayer with him. He now vigorouſly applied himſelf to the improvement of his underſtanding; and having no more work at ſchool,—it ſeems, becauſe he ſoon acquired all the learning his maſter could give him, —and finding that the buſineſs of catechizing was deſerted at Alexandria becauſe of the perſecution, he undertook the work himſelf; and ſeveral gentiles came to hear him and became his diſciples. He was now in the eighteenth year of his age; and in the heat of the perſecution he diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his attachment to the martyrs, not only to thoſe of his acquaintance, but in general to all who ſuffered for Chriſtianity. He viſited ſuch of them as were fettered in deep dungeons and cloſe impriſonment; and was preſent with them even after their condemnation, and boldly attended them to the place of execution: he openly embraced and ſaluted them; and was, once, in imminent danger of being ſtoned to death on this account. Indeed he was repeatedly in peril of his life; for the perſecution daily prevailed; and he could no longer paſs ſafely through the ſtreets of

Alexandria. He often changed his lodgings, but was every where purſued; and, humanly ſpeaking, it ſeemed impoſſible for him to eſcape. His inſtructions, however, and his zeal produced great effects: multitudes crowded to hear him; and were by his labours incited to attend to Chriſtianity.

The charge of the ſchool was now, by Demetrius the biſhop, committed to him alone; and he converted it wholly into a ſchool of religious information: He maintained himſelf by the ſale of the profane books which he had been wont to ſtudy. Thus he lived many years, an amazing monument, at once both of induſtry and of ſelf-denial. Not only the day, but the greater part of the night was by him devoted to religious ſtudy; and he practiſed, with literal conſcientiouſneſs, our Lord's rules of not having two coats, nor two pairs of ſhoes, and of not providing for futurity. He was inured to cold, nakedneſs, and poverty: He offended many by his unwillingneſs to receive their gratuities: He abſtained from wine; and, in general, lived ſo abſtemiouſly, as to endanger his life. Many perſons imitated his exceſſive auſterities: and were, at that time, honoured with the name of philoſophers; and ſome of them patiently ſuffered martyrdom.

I ſtate facts as I find them.—A ſtrong ſpirit of ſelf-righteouſneſs, meeting with a ſecret ambition, too ſubtile to be perceived by him who is the dupe of it, and ſupported by a natural fortitude of mind and by the active exertion of great talents, hath enabled many in external things to ſeem ſuperior in piety to men of real humility and ſelf-diffidence, who penetrating more happily into the genius of the Goſpel, by the exerciſe of faith in the Son of God and that genuine charity which is

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its fruit, are led into a courſe of conduct leſs dazzling indeed, but much more agreeable to the Goſpel. One cannot form a high idea of the ſolid judgment of theſe Alexandrian converts. Were there none of the elder and more experienced Chriſtians in that city, who were capable, with meekneſs of wiſdom, of correcting the exuberances of this zealous youth, and of ſhewing him that, by ſuch a refuſal of the comforts of life, he affected a ſuperiority to Paul himſelf, who gratefully received the alms of the Philippians?—Exceſſes of this ſort muſt have been attended with great defects in inward vital godlineſs: The reader is again referred to the ſecond chapter of the epiſtle to the Coloſſians for a comment on the conduct of Origen. How much better had it been for him to have continued a ſcholar for ſome time longer; and not to have feaſted the pride of the human heart by appointing him a teacher! —But the lively flow of genius ſeems to have been miſtaken for great growth in Chriſtian knowledge and piety.

One of his ſcholars, called Plutarch, was led to martyrdom. Origen accompanied him to the place of execution. The odium of the ſcholar's ſufferings reflected on the maſter; and it was not without a peculiar providence that he eſcaped the vengeance of the citizens. After him Serenus ſuffered by fire: the third martyr was Heraclides; the fourth Heron. The former had not yet been baptized, being only what was called a Catechumen; the latter had been lately baptized; but both were beheaded. A ſecond Serenus of the ſame ſchool, having ſuſtained great torments and much pain, was beheaded. A woman alſo, called Rais, as yet a Catechumen, ſuffered death. Potamiæna, a young woman remarkable for beauty,

purity of mind, and firmneſs in the faith of Chriſt, ſuffered very dreadful torments: She was ſcourged very ſeverely by the order of Aquila the judge, who threatened to deliver her to be abuſed by the baſeſt characters. But ſhe remained firm in the faith; was led to the fire, and burned together with her mother Marcella. The heart of Baſilides, a ſoldier, who preſided at her execution, was ſoftened. He pitied her, treated her courteouſly, and protected her, ſo far as he durſt, from the inſolence of the mob. She acknowledged his kindneſs, thanked him, and promiſed that after her departure ſhe would intreat the Lord for him. Scalding pitch was poured on her whole body, which ſhe ſuſtained in much patience. Some time after Baſilides, being required by his fellow-ſoldiers to ſwear profanely on a certain occaſion, he refuſed, and confeſſed himſelf a Chriſtian. They diſbelieved him at firſt; but finding him ſerious, they carried him before the judge, who remanded him to priſon. The Chriſtians viſited him; and upon being queſtioned as to the cauſe of his ſudden change, he declared that Potamiæna, three days after her martyrdom, had appeared to him by night, and informed him that ſhe had performed her promiſe; and that he ſhould ſhortly die.—After this he ſuffered martyrdom.

The reader will think this an extraordinary ſtory: It is tinged with ſuperſtition, no doubt; but who can venture, without meriting the imputation of temerity, to reject it altogether as a fiction. Euſebius lived at no great diſtance from the time of Origen: He had made accurate inquiries after him and his followers in Alexandria; and he obſerves that the fame of Potamiæna was in his own time very great in that province. Her martyrdom and that of the ſoldier ſeem ſufficiently authentic.

authentic. Her promiſe to pray for him after her departure only ſhews the gradual prevalence of fanatical philoſophy, will-worſhip, and the like; and if the reader be not prepared by a ſufficient degree of candour to admit the truth of authentic narratives and the reality of converting grace, becauſe pitiably ſtained, in many inſtances, with ſuch ſuperſtition, he will find little ſatisfaction in the evidences of Chriſtian piety for many ages. But we are ſlaves to habit. In our own time we make great allowances in Chriſtians for the love of the world: we are not ſo eaſily diſpoſed to make allowances for ſuperſtitions. Yet many wrong ſentiments and views may be found where the heart is devoted, in faith and love, to God and his Chriſt. It will ſtill be objected that God would not ſanctify ſuperſtitions of this ſort by cauſing ſupernaturally the deceaſed ſpirit of a martyr to appear to Baſilides.—I anſwer,—the ſuppoſition of a dream removes all the difficulty; and the more eaſily, when we recollect that the man's mind could not fail to have been previouſly under a ſtrong impreſſion of the perſon of the ſufferer, of her late martyrdom, and of the circumſtances which attended it.

A peculiar reſolution made and put into execuabout this time by Origen illuſtrates his character in the ſtrongeſt manner. Though diſpoſed beyond moſt men to allegorize the Scriptures, in one paſſage he followed their literal ſenſe too cloſely, "There are ſome who have made themſelves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's ſake*."—We need not be at a loſs for his motives. He was much converſant among women as a catechizer and an expounder of the Scriptures;—and, no doubt, he was deſirous of removing occaſions for the

* Matthew xix. 12.

the ſlanders of infidels, as well as temptations from himſelf.—However he took all poſſible pains to conceal the fact.

One cannot but be aſtoniſhed in noticing how ſtrong the ſelf-righteous maxims and views were grown in the Church;—yet ſtill,—piety of principle, combined with fervour of zeal, muſt be revered by every one, who is not loſt to all ſenſe of goodneſs.—The extraordinary ſtep taken by Origen, above alluded to, could not remain a ſecret. Demetrius his biſhop, at firſt encouraged and commended him: afterward*, through the power of envy, on account of his growing popularity, he publiſhed the fact abroad with a view to aſperſe him. However, the biſhops of Cæſarea and Jeruſalem protected and ſupported him, and ordained him a preſbyter in the Church. Day and night he continued ſtill to labour at Alexandria.—But it is time to turn from Alexandria to other parts of the Roman empire; and to ſee what effects were produced by this ſame perſecution of Severus.

Alexander, a biſhop in Cappadocia, confeſſed the faith of Chriſt, and ſuſtained a variety of ſufferings; and yet by the providence of God was at length delivered:—and he travelled afterwards to Jeruſalem. There he was joyfully received by Narciſſus the very aged biſhop of that See, a man of extraordinary piety, who aſſociated Alexander with him in the labours of Chriſtian inſtruction. Some epiſtles of the latter were extant in Euſebius's time, who gives us a ſhort fragment of one of them, ſufficiently authenticating the fact,—that thoſe two holy men were joint paſtors of Jeruſalem.

"Narciſſus greets you, who governed this biſhopric before me; and now being an hundred and ſixteen

* Euſeb. B. 6. C. 7.

ſixteen years old, prayeth with me, and that very ſeriouſly, for the ſtate of the Church, and beſeeches you to be of one mind with me."

If the ancient martyrologiſts had been preſerved uncorrupted, they would afford us uſeful materials, and illuſtrate much the ſpirit and genius of real Chriſtianity in its primitive profeſſors. But frauds, interpolations, and impoſtures, are endleſs: The papal and monaſtic ſuperſtitions, in after-ages, induced their ſupporters to corrupt theſe martyrologiſts, and indeed the writings of the fathers in general. The difficulty of procuring materials for a well-connected credible hiſtory of real Chriſtians is, hence, increaſed exceedingly. What I cannot believe, I ſhall not take the trouble to tranſcribe; what I can, where the matter appears worthy of memory, ſhall be exhibited. This is the caſe of the martyrs of Scillita, a city of Africa, in the province of Carthage. The narration is ſimple, credible throughout, and worthy of the pureſt ages of the Goſpel.—The facts belong to the times of Severus.

"Twelve perſons were brought before Saturninus the proconſul at Carthage, the chief of whom were Speratus, Narzal, and Cittin, and three women, Donata, Secunda, and Veſtina. When they came before him, he ſaid to them all, "You may expect the emperor our maſter's pardon, if you return to your ſenſes, and obſerve the ceremonies of our gods." To which Speratus replied, "We have never been guilty of any thing that is evil, nor been partakers of injuſtice: We have even prayed for thoſe who perſecute us unjuſtly; in which we obey OUR EMPEROR, who preſcribed to us this rule of behaviour." Saturninus anſwered, "We have alſo a religion that is ſimple: We ſwear by the genius of the emperors, and we offer up

vows for their health, which you ought alſo to do." Speratus anſwered, "If you will hear me patiently, I will declare unto you the myſtery of Chriſtian ſimplicity." The proconſul ſaid, "Shall I hear you ſpeak ill of our ceremonies? Rather ſwear, all of you, by the genius of the emperors our maſters, that you may enjoy the pleaſures of life." Speratus anſwered, "I know not the genius of the emperors. I ſerve God, who is in heaven, whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee. I have never been guilty of any crime puniſhable by the public laws: if I buy any thing, I pay the duties to the collectors: I acknowledge my God and Saviour to be the Supreme Governor of all nations: I have made no complaints againſt any perſon; and therefore they ought to make none againſt me." The proconſul turning to the reſt ſaid, "Do not ye imitate the folly of this mad wretch; but rather fear our prince and obey his commands." Cittin anſwered, "We fear only the Lord our God, who is in heaven." The proconſul then ſaid,—"Let them be carried to priſon, and put in fetters till to-morrow."

The next day the proconſul, ſeated on his tribunal, cauſed them to be brought before him, and ſaid to the women,—"Honour our prince, and do ſacrifice to the gods." Donata replied, "We honour Cæſar as Cæſar; but to God we offer prayer and worſhip." Veſtina ſaid, "I alſo am a Chriſtian." Secunda ſaid, "I alſo believe in my God, and will continue ſtedfaſt to him; and, in regard to your gods, we will not ſerve and adore them." The proconſul ordered them to be ſeparated; then, having called for the men, he ſaid to Speratus, "Perſevereſt thou in being a Chriſtian." Speratus anſwered, "Yes, I do perſevere;—Let all give ear, I am a Chriſtian;" which being heard

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by the reſt, they ſaid, "We alſo are Chriſtians." The proconſul ſaid, "You will neither conſider your danger nor receive mercy." They replied, "Do what you pleaſe, we ſhall die joyfully for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt." The proconſul aſked, "What books are thoſe which you read and revere?" Speratus replied, "The four Goſpels of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; the Epiſtles of the Apoſtle St. Paul, and all the Scripture that is inſpired of God." The proconſul ſaid, "I will give you three days to reflect and to come to yourſelves." Upon which Speratus anſwered, "I am a Chriſtian, and ſuch are all thoſe who are with me: and we will never quit the faith of our Lord Jeſus. Do, therefore, what you think fit."

The proconſul ſeeing their reſolution, pronounced ſentence againſt them,—that they ſhould die by the hands of the executioner, in theſe terms:—"Speratus and the reſt, having acknowledged themſelves to be Chriſtians, and having refuſed to pay due honour to the emperor, I command their heads to be cut off." This ſentence having been read, Speratus and his fellow-ſufferers ſaid, "We give thanks to God, who honoureth us this day with being received as martyrs in heaven, for confeſſing his name." They were carried to the place of puniſhment, where they fell on their knees all together, and having again given thanks to Jeſus Chriſt, they were beheaded*.

† At Carthage itſelf four young Catechumens were ſeized, Revocatus and Felicitas,—ſlaves to the ſame maſter,—with Saturninus and Secondulus, and alſo Vivia Perpetua, a lady of quality. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom one was a Catechumen: ſhe was about twenty-two years of age; was married, and was then

* Fleury, B. 5. p. 77. † Acta ſincera, p. 86.

then pregnant; and moreover, ſhe had a young child at her breaſt. To theſe five, by an exceſs of zeal too common at that time, Satur, voluntarily, joined himſelf. While they were in the hands of the perſecutors, the father of Perpetua, himſelf a Pagan but full of affection to his favourite offſpring, importuned her to fall from the faith. His intreaties were vain. Her pious conſtancy appeared to him an abſurd obſtinacy, and enraged him ſo much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. For a few days while theſe catechumens were under guard, but not confined in the priſon, they found means to be baptized; and Perpetua's prayers were directed particularly for patience under bodily pains. They were then put into a dark priſon. To the reſt, who had been more accuſtomed to hardſhips, this change of ſcene had not any thing in it very terrible. To her, who had experienced nothing but the delicacies of genteel life, it was peculiarly formidable and diſtreſſing: Her concern for her infant was extreme.—Tertius and Pomponius, two deacons of the Church, obtained by money, that the priſoners might go out of the dark dungeon, and for ſome hours refreſh themſelves in a more commodious place, where Perpetua gave the breaſt to her infant, and then recommended him carefully to her mother. For ſome time her mind was oppreſſed with concern for the miſery ſhe had brought on her family; though it was for the ſake of a good conſcience; but ſhe grew more compoſed, and her priſon became a palace.

Her father, ſome time after, came to the priſon overwhelmed with grief; which, in all probability, was augmented by the reflections he had made on his own rough and angry behaviour to her at their laſt interview. "Have pity, my daughter," ſays he, "on my

my grey hairs; have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name: if I myſelf have brought you up to this age; if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind: reſpect your father and your aunt—theſe, it ſeems, were joined in the intereſts of paganiſm, while the mother appears to have been a Chriſtian, otherwiſe his ſilence concerning her ſeems ſcarcely to be accounted for;—have compaſſion on your ſon, who cannot ſurvive you: lay aſide your obſtinacy, leſt you deſtroy us all: for if you periſh, we muſt all of us ſhut our mouths in diſgrace." The old gentleman, with much tenderneſs, kiſſed her hands, threw himſelf at her feet, weeping and calling her no longer his daughter, but his miſtreſs—the miſtreſs of his fate! He was the only perſon of the family who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. Perpetua, though inwardly torn with filial affection, could offer him no other comfort than to deſire him to acquieſce in the divine diſpoſal.

The next day they were all brought into the court, and examined in the preſence of vaſt crowds. There the unhappy old gentleman appeared with his little grandſon, and taking Perpetua aſide, conjured her to have ſome pity on her child. The procurator, Hilarian, joined in the ſuit, but in vain. The old man then attempted to draw his daughter from the ſcaffold. Hilarian ordered him to be beaten; and a blow, which he received with a ſtaff, was felt by Perpetua very ſeverely.

Hilarian condemned them to be expoſed to the wild beaſts. They then returned cheerfully to their priſon. Perpetua ſent the deacon, Pomponius, to demand her child of her father, which he refuſed to return. The health of the child, we are

are told, ſuffered not; nor did Perpetua feel any bodily inconvenience.

Secondulus died in priſon. Felicitas was eight months gone with child; and ſeeing the day of the public ſhews to be near, ſhe was much afflicted, leſt her execution ſhould take place before her delivery. Her companions joined in prayer for her three days before the ſpectacles; and ſhe was, with great difficulty, delivered of a child. One of the door-keepers, who, perhaps, expected to have found in her a ſtoical inſenſibility, and heard her cries, ſaid, "Do you complain of THIS? what will you do when you are expoſed to the beaſts?" Felicitas anſwered, with a ſagacity truly Chriſtian, "It is I that ſuffer now, but then there will be another with me, that will ſuffer for me, becauſe I ſhall ſuffer for his ſake."—Her new-born daughter was delivered to a Chriſtian woman, who nurſed it as her own.

The tribune appears to have credited a report, that the priſoners would free themſelves by magical practices; and, in conſequence, to have treated them roughly. "Why don't you," ſays Perpetua, "give us ſome relief? Will it not be for your honour that we ſhould appear well fed at the ſpectacles?"

This addreſs of hers had the deſired effect: It procured a very agreeable alteration in their treatment. On the day before the ſhews they were ſupplied with their laſt meal; and the martyrs did their utmoſt to convert it into an *αγαπη: they ate in public: their brethren and others were allowed to viſit them; and the keeper of the priſon himſelf, by this time, was converted to the faith: they talked to the people, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come: they pointed out to them their own happy lot, and ſmiled at the curioſity of thoſe who

* A love-feaſt.

who ran to ſee them. "Obſerve well our faces," cries Satur, with much animation, "that ye may know them at the day of judgment."

The Spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial: joy, rather than fear was painted on their looks. Perpetua, cheriſhed by Jeſus Chriſt, went on with a compoſed countenance and an eaſy pace, holding down her eyes, leſt the ſpectators might draw wrong concluſions from their vivacity. Some idolatrous garments were offered them by the Pagans: "We ſacrifice our lives," ſaid they, "to avoid every thing of this kind."—The tribune deſiſted from his demand.

Perpetua ſang, as already victorious: and Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satur, endeavoured to affect the people with the fear of the wrath to come. Being come into Hilarian's preſence, "Thou judgeſt us," ſaid they, "and God ſhall judge thee." The mob was enraged, and inſiſted on their being ſcourged before they were expoſed to the beaſts. It was done, and the martyrs rejoiced in being conformed to their Saviour's ſufferings.

Perpetua and Felicitas were ſtripped, and put into the nets, and expoſed to a wild cow. The ſpectators were ſhocked at the ſight: for the one was an accompliſhed beauty, and the other had been newly delivered of a child.—The aſſiſting executioner drew them back and covered them with looſe garments. Perpetua was firſt attacked; and falling backwards ſhe put herſelf into a reclining poſture; and ſeeing her habit torn by her ſide, ſhe retired to cover herſelf: ſhe then gathered up her hair, that ſhe might ſeem leſs diſordered: ſhe raiſed herſelf up, and ſeeing Felicitas bruiſed, ſhe gave her her hand and lifted her up: then they went toward the gate, where Perpetua was received by a catechumen

called

called Ruſticus, who attended her. "I wonder," ſaid ſhe, "when they will expoſe us to the cow;" —She had been, it ſeems, inſenſible of what had paſſed, nor could believe it till ſhe ſaw on her body and clothes the marks of her ſufferings. She cauſed her brother to be called, and addreſſing herſelf to him and Ruſticus, ſhe ſaid, "Continue firm in the faith; love one another; and be neither frightened nor offended at our ſufferings."

The people inſiſted on having the martyrs brought into the midſt of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleaſure of ſeeing them die: ſome of them roſe up and went forward of their own accord, after having given one another the kiſs of charity: others received the laſt blow without ſpeaking or ſtirring. Perpetua fell into the hands of an unſkilful gladiator, who pierced her between the ribs ſo as to give her much unneceſſary pain. She cried out; and then ſhe herſelf guided his trembling hand to her throat:—and thus with the reſt ſhe ſlept in Jeſus.

Auguſtine, in his expoſition of the forty-ſeventh pſalm, takes notice of the victorious ſtrength of divine love prevailing over all natural affections, and produces this ſame Perpetua as an example*.—"We know and read thus in the ſufferings of the bleſſed Perpetua."—He mentions the ſame ſtory alſo in three other places in his treatiſe of the ſoul†. But it is evident that he doubts whether Perpetua herſelf wrote what is aſcribed to her. If ſo, WE may well doubt; and more than doubt the truth of the viſions with which this excellent narrative has been intermixed; and with which I have not thought it worth while to trouble the reader. Yet the general hiſtory has every mark of

* Tom. v. iii. † L. 1. C. 10. L. 3. C. 9. L 4. 18. Tom. 7.

of authenticity. — Auguſtine himſelf publiſhed three ſermons on the anniverſary of the martyrs. It is much to be regretted that the fineſt monuments of eccleſiaſtical antiquity have been thus tarniſhed by mixtures of fraud or ſuperſtition.— The authority of Auguſtine has enabled me to diſtinguiſh with ſome degree of preciſion the truth from the falſhood. My buſineſs does not call me to recite the frauds; and it will be needleſs to add further remarks: the pious reader ſees, with pleaſure, that God was yet preſent with his people.—Indeed the power of God appeared evidently diſplayed during the courſe of this dreadful perſecution, by the ſudden and amazing converſions of ſeveral perſons who voluntarily ſuffered death for that doctrine which they before deteſted. Of this we have the very reſpectable teſtimony of Origen, who, whatever other defects he be juſtly charged with, is certainly allowed to be of unqueſtionable veracity*.

Severus would naturally extend this perſecution to Gaul, the ſcene of his former cruelties. In fact, it was now that Irenæus ſuffered: and many more ſuffered with him; and Lyons was once more dyed with the blood of the martyrs of Jeſus. Vivarius and Androlus, who had been ſent by Polycarp there to preach the Goſpel, were put to death. At Comana in Pamphilia Zoticus the biſhop, who had diſtinguiſhed himſelf by writing againſt the Montaniſts, obtained the crown of martyrdom.

At this trying ſeaſon it was, that ſome Churches purchaſed their peace and quiet by paying money, not only to the magiſtrates, but alſo to the informers and ſoldiers who were appointed to ſearch them out. The paſtors of the Churches approved of

* Contra Celſum, L. 1.

of this proceeding, becauſe it was only ſuffering the loſs of their goods, and preferring that to the endangering of their lives. However caſuiſts may decide this queſtion, it is eaſily conceivable that the practice might take place with many in real uprightneſs of heart.

It is uſual with God to moderate the ſufferings of his people, and not to ſuffer them to be tried by perſecution at once very long and very violent.—
A. D. 211. In the year two hundred and eleven, after a reign of eighteen years, the tyrant Severus died: and the Church found repoſe and tranquillity under his ſon and ſucceſſor Caracalla, though a monſter of wickedneſs.

Divine providence had long before prepared for the Chriſtians this mitigation of trial, in the circumſtances of Caracalla's education. He had known Proculus the Chriſtian, who had recovered the health of his father, and was maintained in his palace to his death: and he had himſelf been nurſed, when an infant, by a Chriſtian woman. Though this could not win his heart to Jeſus Chriſt, it gave him an early predilection in favour of Chriſtians, inſomuch that obſerving, when he was ſeven years old, one of his play-fellows to be beaten becauſe he followed the Chriſtian religion*, he could not, for ſome time after, behold with patience either his own father or the father of the boy. Certainly few men have ever exceeded him in the ferocious vices; yet, during the ſix years and two months which he reigned, the Chriſtians found in him friendſhip and protection. Indeed, for the ſpace of thirty and eight years,—from the death

* Spartian's Caracalla. The Pagan author ſays "becauſe he followed the Jewiſh Religion;" but, moſt probably, he means the Chriſtian,

death of Severus to the reign of Decius,—if we except the ſhort turbulent interval of Maximinus, the Church enjoyed a continued calm*.—About the year two hundred and ten Origen came to Rome, where Zephyrinus was biſhop, deſirous of viſiting that antient Church, but ſoon returned to Alexandria, and to his office of catechizing. He entruſted to Heraclas, his aſſociate in that employment, the inſtruction of the more ignorant, while he himſelf took care of thoſe who had made a greater proficiency. His active ſpirit induced him to ſtudy the Hebrew language; and the firſt fruit of his labour was the publication of the Hexapla. In this great work he gave the Hebrew text and the tranſlations of the Septuagint, of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion,—and two others, which had long been obſolete, and whoſe authors were unknown. Of theſe interpreters Symmachus was an Ebionite; that is, he held that Chriſt was but a mere man†; and he inveighed againſt the genuine Goſpel of St. Matthew, for no other reaſon, that I can ſee, but on account of the clear teſtimony which the beginning of it affords againſt his hereſy.—Theſe works of Origen, in addition to his conſtant diligence, both in writing and in preaching, are monuments at leaſt of the moſt laudable induſtry. The evangelical reader would wiſh, no doubt, to ſee ſtronger ſigns of real Chriſtian proficiency in experimental and practical religion;—but we muſt be content with ſuch matter as eccleſiaſtical materials afford us. A. D. 210.

One Ambroſe, addicted to the Valentinian hereſy, an extremely fanciful and romantic ſcheme, not worthy of the reader's attention, found himſelf confuted by Origen, and was brought over to the

* Sulpitius Severus, B. 2. C. 42. † Euſeb. B. 6. C. 16.

the Church. Many learned men alſo felt the force of his argumentations. Heretics and philoſophers attended his lectures; and he took, no doubt, a very excellent method to procure regard, to himſelf at leaſt;—he inſtructed them in profane and ſecular learning. He confuted the opinions of the different ſects by oppoſing them to each other; and he expoſed the various fallacies with ſo much acuteneſs and ſagacity, that he obtained among the gentiles the reputation of a Great Philoſopher. He encouraged many perſons to ſtudy the liberal arts, aſſuring them, that they would, by that means, be much better furniſhed for the contemplation of the holy Scriptures:—He was entirely of opinion, that ſecular and philophical inſtitutes were very neceſſary and profitable to his own mind.—Does it eſcape the reader, how much in the courſe of Chriſtian annals we are already departed, though by inſenſible degrees, from Chriſtian ſimplicity? Here is a man looked up to with reverence, at leaſt by the eaſtern Church, as a great luminary;—a man, who, in his younger days, was himſelf a ſcholar of the amphibious Ammonius; who mixed together Chriſtianity and pagan philoſophy; and who, by reading his motley lectures, drew over, in form at leaſt, many of the heathen philoſophers to embrace the religion of Jeſus. Theſe mention him often in their books: ſome dedicate their works to him; and others reſpectfully deliver them to him as their maſter. All this Euſebius tells us with much apparent ſatisfaction. To him the Goſpel ſeems to have triumphed over gentiliſm by theſe means.—There is no doubt, but, in a certain ſenſe, Origen's ſucceſs was great; but I much fear that, in return, the pure Goſpel ſuffered greatly by an admixture of gentiliſm. What can

this extraordinary teacher and author mean by aſſerting the utility and even the * neceſſity of philoſophy for himſelf as a Chriſtian? Are not the Scriptures ABLE TO MAKE A MAN WISE UNTO SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS, THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED TO EVERY GOOD WORK? Suppoſe a man of common ſenſe, perfectly unacquainted with all the learned lore of Ammonius, to ſtudy ONLY the ſacred books, with prayer, dependence on divine guidance and illumination, and with ſelf-examination? Is it not conceivable that he may acquire a competent,—nay, even an eminent knowledge of the Scriptures? Certainly an acquaintance with claſſical and philoſophical learning may furniſh him with ſtrong arguments to prove the neceſſity and the excellency of divine revelation; and therefore they deſerve ſeriouſly to be encouraged in the minds of all who are to inſtruct others,—for their improvement in taſte, language, eloquence, and hiſtory; but if they are to DICTATE in religion,—or are thought capable even of ADDING to the ſtock of theological knowledge,—the Scriptures,—with reverence be it ſpoken,—may ſeem to have been defectively written. In truth, we hear, among theſe learned converts of Origen, nothing—of conviction of ſin,—of converſion,—of the influence of the Holy Spirit,—of the love of Chriſt. They are pleaſed with their maſter:—Superior parts and learning always command the eſteem of mankind:—but, what are all his labours which we have now before us, but vain attempts to mix things which the Holy Ghoſt has declared will not incorporate? The miſchief, which actually followed was to be expected: Characters were confounded: and henceforward,

* Euſeb. B. 6.—17.

forward, among the learned, the diſtinction between Chriſtian godlineſs and human philoſophy is but faintly marked.—If Origen had ſimply and plainly expounded to his learned auditors the peculiar and vital truths of the Goſpel, I cannot but ſuſpect that many of them would have ceaſed to attend his inſtructions.

The famous Porphyry,—than whom Chriſtianity had never a more acrimonious enemy,—takes notice of Origen's allegorical mode of interpreting Scripture, obſerves that he was acquainted with him when young, and bears teſtimony to his rapid improvements under Ammonius. He aſſerts,—what indeed Euſebius, who muſt have known, contradicts,—that Ammonius, though brought up a Chriſtian, turned afterwards a gentile. He acknowledges "that Origen continually peruſed Plato, Numenius, and the reſt of the Pythagoreans; that he was well verſed in Chæremon the Stoic and in Cornutus; and, that from all theſe maſters, he borrowed the Grecian manner of allegorical interpretation, and applied it to the Jewiſh Scriptures."

We have ſeen, before, the wanton ſpirit of allegory introduced by Ammonius: and it is very probable that Origen then firſt learnt to treat the Scriptures in the ſame manner. He had the candour to confeſs that he had been miſtaken in his literal interpretation of our Saviour's words concerning eunuchs. He, afterwards, fell into the contrary extreme, and allegorized all the three clauſes in the Goſpel of St. Matthew* ;—and introduced ſuch a complicated ſcheme of fanciful interpretation, as for many ages after,—through the exceſſive reſpect paid to this man,—much obſcured the light of Scripture.

There

* Chap. xix. 12.

There wanted not, however, ſome perſons who found fault with Origen for all this attachment to pagan philoſophy. Probably, ſimple, docile, ingenuous minds, which deſired to be fed with the "SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD, THAT THEY MIGHT GROW THEREBY," found themſelves ſtarved amidſt all this heterogeneous, inconſiſtent doctrine. He felt himſelf called upon to vindicate his practice;—which he does, only by obſerving the uſe of philoſophy in confuting heretics; and by the example of Pantænus and of Heraclas, an Alexandrian paſtor,—his coadjutor, who formerly had worn the common dreſs, and afterwards took up the philoſopher's garb, and ſtill ſtudied earneſtly the writings of the heathen philoſophers. What does all this prove but the deſtructive progreſs of this epidemical diſeaſe?

The governor of Arabia ſent to Demetrius, deſiring the inſtruction of Origen; who did not heſitate to undertake the neceſſary journey for that purpoſe; and he then returned back to Alexandria.

The elegant publication of Minucius Felix,—a work deſerving even to be ranked among the Latin claſſics for neatneſs and purity of ſtyle, was an ornament to the Latin Church. The arguments contained in it againſt Paganiſm are well pointed and well adapted to the ſtate of the world at that time: It is only to be regretted that we ſee not more of the real nature of Chriſtianity in that celebrated performance.

In the year two hundred and ſeventeen Macrinus ſucceeded Caracalla, who had reigned a little more than ſix years. A. D. 217.

CHAP. VI.

STATE OF CHRISTIANITY DURING THE REIGNS OF MACRINUS, HELIOGABALUS, ALEXANDER, MAXIMINUS, PUPIENUS, GORDIAN, AND PHILIP.

MACRINUS reigned one year and two months; and was ſucceeded by Heliogabalus; whoſe follies and vices are infamous; but it does not appear that the Church of God ſuffered on that account. He ſeems not to have conceived any particular prejudices againſt Chriſtians; on the contrary, he expreſſed a deſire of removing their rites of worſhip to Rome.—It is not worth while to attempt an explanation of the views of ſo ſenſeleſs a prince.—He was ſlain at the age
A. D. of eighteen, in the year two hundred and twenty-
222. two, after he had ſwayed the ſceptre three years and nine months. His couſin Alexander ſucceeded him; who was then only in the ſixteenth year of his age, but was eſteemed one of the beſt moral characters in profane hiſtory.—His mother Mammæa, is called by Euſebius *, a moſt godly and religious woman.—I am at a loſs to vindicate the expreſſion.—It does not appear that ſhe received the faith of Chriſt:—however,—neither ſhe nor her ſon perſecuted, they rather approved and countenanced, the Chriſtians. They were perſons of candour and probity themſelves; and they ſaw that,

* Euſeb. L. 6. Fleury, B. V. IV.

that, in ethics at leaſt, the people of God concurred with their own views. Their conduct was laudable; but—MARK the miſchief of uniting Chriſtianity with philoſophy! How cheap is the term GODLY grown in the eyes of Euſebius!

The providence of God not only ſecured his Church from ſuffering, but procured it a favourable patron in this princeſs and her ſon. The emperor had a domeſtic chapel, where, every morning, he worſhipped thoſe deceaſed princes, whoſe characters were moſt eſteemed: their ſtatues were placed among thoſe of the gods; and into this company he introduced Apollonius of Tyana, Jeſus Chriſt, Abraham, and Orpheus*. He had a deſire to erect even a temple to Chriſt and to receive him regularly into the number of the gods.

There are, on record, other inſtances of his candor towards the Chriſtians.—The right of poſſeſſing a certain piece of ground was claimed by a tavern-keeper: It had been† COMMON for a long time, and the Chriſtians had occupied it for a place of worſhip.—"It is fitter," ſaid Alexander, "that God ſhould be ſerved there, in any manner whatever, rather than that it ſhould be uſed for a tavern." He frequently uſed this Chriſtian ſentence, "DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY." He obliged a crier to repeat it when he puniſhed any perſon; and was ſo fond of it, that he cauſed it to be written in his palace and in the public buildings. When he was going to appoint governors of provinces or other offices, he propoſed their names in public, giving the people notice, that if they had any crime to accuſe them of, they ſhould come forward and make it known. "It would be a ſhame," ſays he, "not to do that with reſpect to governors who are entruſted with men's properties

* Lamprid. † That is, without owner or poſſeſſor.

ties and lives, which is done by Jews and Chriſtians when they publiſh the names of thoſe whom they mean to ordain Prieſts." And, indeed, by Origen's account *, the Chriſtians were ſo very careful in the choice of their paſtors, that the civil magiſtrates were by no means to be compared with them in probity and ſound morality. This prince had, it ſeems, too much gravity and virtue for the times in which he lived:—for ſome perſons, in deriſion, called him Archyſynagogus †.

It ſeems to have been his plan to encourage every thing that carried the appearance of religion and virtue; and to diſcountenance whatever was openly immoral and profane.—His hiſtorian ‡ tells us "that he favoured aſtrologers, and permitted them to teach publicly: that he himſelf was well ſkilled in the vain ſcience of the Aruſpices, and was maſter of that of the Augurs in a high degree."

A. D. 229. In the year two hundred and twenty-nine Alexander was obliged to go to the Eaſt, and to reſide at Antioch. His mother Mammæa went with him, and having heard of the fame of Origen, and being very curious to hear new things; ſhe ſent him a guard, and cauſed him to come to her. All the account we have of this interview is, that he continued there a while, and publiſhed many things to the glory of God, and concerning the power of the heavenly doctrine; and, that he then returned to his ſchool at Alexandria.

What Origen taught this princeſs we are not told: What he ought to have taught her, the Acts of the Apoſtles would have amply informed him.—A plain and artleſs declaration of the vanity and wickedneſs of all the reigning idolatries and philoſophical ſects;—and what is ſtill more—of the cor-

* Ag. Celſus, B. III. and VIII.

† The chief ruler of the ſynagogue. ‡ Lampridius.

corruption, helpleſſneſs, and miſery of man, and a faithful information concerning the only way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, the great duty of believing on him, of confeſſing him, and of admitting the ſanctifying operations of his Spirit,—theſe things a perfectly ſound preacher would have ſhewn to her; and his exhortations would have been entirely founded on theſe doctrines; nor would he have felt the neceſſity of aiding his meſſage by the authority of Plato or of any other philoſopher.—Hiſtory informs us of no remarkable effect which attended the miniſtry of Origen on this occaſion. That he ſpake what he believed and what he thought moſt wiſe and expedient, is not to be doubted; but we may be allowed to lament, that his own ſtate and views were too ſimilar to thoſe of Mammæa and of her ſon to have permitted him to repreſent Chriſtianity to them in the cleareſt and the moſt ſtriking manner. In truth, it is to be feared that a number of Chriſtians ſo called, at this time, were much of the ſame religion with Alexander himſelf.—He ſeems to have learnt, in ſome meaſure, the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead; and by the help of the eclectic philoſophy to have conſolidated all religions into one maſs.—But the Scriptural method of teaching things that accompany ſalvation will not incorporate with this ſyſtem of doctrines.

The liberality of his friend Ambroſe enabled Origen to proſecute his Scriptural ſtudies with vaſt rapidity. Ambroſe himſelf was a deacon of the Church; and, by his faithfulneſs under perſecution, he obtained the name of Confeſſor.

At this time Noetus of Smyrna propagated the ſame hereſy in the Eaſt, which Praxeas had done in the Weſt,—namely, that there was no diſtinction among the divine perſons. The paſtors of the

the Church of Epheſus, ſummoned him before them; and demanded whether he really maintained this opinion. At firſt he denied it; but afterwards, having formed a party, he became more bold, and publicly taught his hereſy. Being again interrogated by the paſtors, he ſaid, "What harm have I done? I glorify none but one God; I know none beſides him who hath been begotten, who ſuffered and died." He evidently, in this way, confounded the perſons of the Father and the Son together; and being obſtinate in his views, he was ejected out of the Church with all his diſciples.—We have here an additional proof of the jealouſy of the primitive Chriſtians in ſupport of the fundamental articles of Chriſtianity: The connexion alſo indiſſolubly preſerved between heretical pravity and pride of heart appeared in this teacher.—He called himſelf Moſes, and his brother Aaron*.

Origen was now ſent for to Athens to aſſiſt the Churches, which were there diſturbed with ſeveral hereſies. Thence he went to Paleſtine. At Cæſarea Theoctiſtus the biſhop, and Alexander biſhop
A. D. of Jeruſalem ordained him a prieſt at the age of
230. forty-five, about the year two hundred and thirty. Demetrius, his own biſhop, was offended; and, at length, divulged what had hitherto been kept very ſecret,—the indiſcreet ſelf-mutilation before-mentioned, which took place in the youth of Origen. Alexander defended himſelf in what he had done by the encomium which Demetrius had given of Origen in his letter. The latter, on his return to Alexandria, found his biſhop quite incenſed againſt him: for, he procured even his ejection from the Church by a council of paſtors on account of ſome errors that appeared in his works. What judgment

* Fleury. B. 5. Epiphanius and Theodoret.

judgment is to be formed of theſe errors I ſhall have a future occaſion to conſider. Baniſhed from Egypt, this great man lived now in Paleſtine with his friends Theoctiſtus and Alexander, ſtill followed by many diſciples, and particularly reſpected by Firmilian of Cappadocia, who looked upon it as a happineſs to enjoy his inſtructions. Here alſo the famous Gregory Thaumaturgus attended his theological lectures, which, even in his exile, were delivered in Origen's uſual manner.

Demetrius, biſhop of Alexandria, died, after having held that office forty-three years. A long period!—but, our information is too indiſtinct and ſcanty to enable us to pronounce his real character. If we were ſure that he preſerved a very upright conſcience toward God in things of eſſential moment, ſomething might be advanced to juſtify his ſevere treatment of Origen: but, as we are left on that head to conjectures, it is, perhaps, better to be ſilent.—Origen's aſſiſtant Heraclas ſucceeded him.

In the year two hundred and thirty-five Alexander was murdered together with his mother; and Maximin the murderer obtained the empire. His malice againſt the houſe of Alexander diſpoſed him to perſecute the Chriſtians; and he gave orders to put to death the paſtors of the Churches. The perſecution was not confined to them: Others ſuffered at the ſame time; and, it ſeems by Firmilian's letter to Cyprian of Carthage, that the flame extended to Cappadocia. Ambroſe, the friend of Origen, and Protoctetus, miniſter of Cæſarea, ſuffered much in the courſe of it; and to them Origen dedicated his book of martyrs. He himſelf was obliged to retire. But the tyrant's reign laſted only three years, in which time it muſt be confeſſed that the reſt of the world had taſted of his

A. D. 235.

his ferocity as much as the Chriſtians had.—His perſecution of THEM was local; but his cruelty to mankind in general ſeemed inſatiable.

Pupienus and Balbinus, the ſucceſſors of Maxi-
A. D. min, were ſlain in the year two hundred and
238. thirty-eight: Gordian reigned for ſix years, and was then ſupplanted by the uſual military turbulence, which made way for his murderer, Philip the Arabian.

Origen, in a letter to his ſcholar Gregory Thaumaturgus, exhorts him to apply himſelf chiefly to the holy Scripture; to read it very attentively; not to ſpeak or judge of it lightly, but with unſhaken faith and prayer, which, ſays he, is abſolutely neceſſary for the underſtanding of it.—This exhortation will be noticed by the pious reader, doubtleſs, with much ſatisfaction. It proves that his philoſophy had not obliterated his Chriſtianity.

A freſh attempt was now made to pervert the doctrine of the perſon of Chriſt.—Beryllus, biſhop of Boſtra in Arabia, affirmed that our Saviour, before his incarnation, had no proper divinity, but only his Father's divinity dwelling in himſelf. Thus Euſebius ſtates the matter. It is not eaſy to form clear ideas of theſe ſentiments: they ſeem, however, to annihilate the divine perſonality of the eternal Word. The man, it ſeems, was not obſtinate: he liſtened to ſound Scriptural argument, and was therefore reclaimed by means of Origen. He even loved his inſtructor ever after, and was ſincerely thankful to him;—a circumſtance, which reflects an amiable light on the character of
A. D. Beryllus *.
244. Philip began to reign in the year two hundred and

* Hieronym. Eccle. Scrip. L. xx.—See Dr. Waterland on the Importance of the Trinity.

and forty-four. Euſebius tells us that he was a Chriſtian; and indeed that he was ſo, by PROFESSION, ſeems well atteſted by the concurrent voice of antiquity. He is ſaid to have ſubmitted to certain eccleſiaſtical cenſures from a biſhop; but the report is void of proper authenticity;—and moſt probably, he ranked at his death only as a Catechumen.—There is, however, no doubt, but in the fourth year of his reign and in the year of Chriſt two hundred and forty-ſeven he allowed and conducted the ſecular games, which were full of idolatry: and this is a fact, which clearly proves that he was not diſpoſed to give up any thing for the ſake of Chriſt: And, in general, there is not the leaſt ground to conclude from hiſtory that he was a cordial friend to the Goſpel.—Nevertheleſs the progreſs of Chriſtianity in the world at this time muſt have been very great, which could induce ſo worldly-minded a perſon as Philip to countenance it without reſerve or ambiguity.—To this emperor and to his wife Severa, Origen wrote an epiſtle, which was extant in Euſebius' time. A. D. 247.

It appears from one of the homilies of Origen that the long peace which the Church,—with only the ſhort interruption of Maximin's perſecution,—had enjoyed, had brought on a great degree of lukewarmneſs and even of much religious indecorum. Let the reader only notice the difference between the ſcenes which he here deſcribes and the conduct of the Chriſtians both in the firſt and ſecond century, and he will be affected with the greatneſs of the declenſion.

"Several*," ſays he, "come to Church only on ſolemn feſtivals; and then, not ſo much for inſtruction as diverſion: Some go out again as ſoon as they have heard the lecture, without conferring

* Fleury.

ferring or aſking the paſtors any queſtions: Others ſtay not till the lecture is ended; and others hear not ſo much as a ſingle word; but entertain themſelves in a corner of the Church."

By the bleſſing of Almighty God, nothing was ſo likely to conquer this careleſs ſpirit, as the faithful diſpenſation of the peculiar truths of the Goſpel in a practical manner, ſo as to ſearch the heart. —But the ability as well as the taſte for doing this had much declined, in the eaſtern part of the Church eſpecially.—Origen complains elſewhere of the ambitious and haughty manners of paſtors, and of the wrong ſteps which ſome took to obtain PREFERMENTS.

This great man was now once more employed in Arabia in confuting another error, namely,—of thoſe who denied the intermediate ſtate of ſouls; and this he managed with his uſual good ſucceſs *.

Philip enjoyed the fruits of his crimes five years, and was then ſlain and ſucceeded by Decius.—A little before his death, in the year two hundred and forty eight, CYPRIAN was choſen biſhop of Carthage.—A ſtar of the firſt magnitude,—when we conſider the times in which he lived.—Let us recreate ourſelves with the contemplation of it: We are fatigued with hunting for Chriſtian goodneſs; and we have diſcovered but little: and that with much difficulty.—We ſhall find Cyprian to be a character, who partook indeed of the declenſions which we have noticed and lamented; but who was ſtill far ſuperior, I apprehend, in real ſimplicity and piety to the Chriſtians of the Eaſt.

A. D. 248.

* Euſeb. B. 6. 36.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE CONVERSION OF CYPRIAN.

THE life of this prelate was written by Pontius his deacon. It is to be regretted, that one who muſt have known him ſo well, ſhould have written in ſo incompetent a manner. Very little diſtinct information is to be gathered from him; but Cyprian's own letters are extant, and from them I ſhall endeavour to exhibit whatever is of the greateſt moment. They are, in truth, a valuable treaſure of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory: The ſpirit, taſte, diſcipline, and habits of the times, among Chriſtians, are ſtrongly delineated; nor have we in all the third century any account to be compared with them. He was a profeſſor of oratory in the city of Carthage, and a man of wealth, quality, and dignity. Cæcilius, a Carthaginian preſbyter, had the felicity, under God, to conduct him to the knowledge of Chriſt; and, in his gratitude, Cyprian afterwards aſſumed the prænomen of Cæcilius. His converſion was about the year two hundred and forty-ſix; and two years before his elevation to the See of Carthage. A. D. 246. About thirteen years comprehends the whole ſcene of his Chriſtian life.—But God can do great things in a little time; or to ſpeak more nervouſly with the ſacred writer, "ONE DAY IS WITH THE LORD AS A THOUSAND YEARS." He did not proceed by ſlow painful ſteps of argumentation, but ſeems to have been led on with vaſt rapidity by the effectual operation

operation of the Divine Spirit:—and he happily eſcaped, in a great meaſure at leaſt, the ſhoals and quickſands of falſe learning and ſelf-conceit, which ſo much tarniſhed the character of his eaſtern brethren. Faith and love in native ſimplicity appear to have been poſſeſſed by him when an early convert. He ſaw with pity the poor of the flock; and he knew no method ſo proper of employing "the unrighteous mammon as in relieving their diſtreſs*."—He ſold whole eſtates for their benefit.

It was an excellent rule of the Apoſtle concerning ordination, "Not a novice, leſt, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." There appeared, however, in Cyprian a ſpirit at once ſo ſimple, ſo zealous, and ſo intelligent, that in about two years after his converſion he was choſen preſbyter, and then biſhop of Carthage.

It was no feigned virtue that thus advanced him in the eyes of the people. With Cyprian the love of Chriſt evidently preponderated above all ſecular conſiderations. In vain his wife oppoſed his Chriſtian ſpirit of liberality. The widow, the orphan, and the poor, found in him a ſympathizing benefactor continually. The preſbyter Cæcilius muſt have beheld with much delight the growing virtues of his pupil:—When dying, he recommended to his care his own wife and children. It was with no ſatisfaction that Cyprian obſerved the deſigns of the people to chooſe him for their biſhop. He retired to avoid ſolicitation: His houſe was beſieged: His retreat was rendered impoſſible. He yielded at length, and with much reluctance accepted the PAINFUL PRE-EMINENCE. For ſo he ſoon found it.—Five preſbyters,

* Pontius Vit. Cyp.

byters, however, were enemies to his exaltation. His lenity, patience, and benevolence towards them were remarked by every one.

The active ſpirit of Cyprian was, no doubt, much employed before he was made a biſhop: Indeed Pontius tells us, that this was actually the caſe; but he communicates no particulars. St. Auſtin ſays, that his letter to Donatus was his firſt work; and, therefore, the time of writing it may ſafely be placed before his arrival at epiſcopal dignity. Part of this letter, as it will illuſtrate his converſion, and ſhew the ſpirit of a man penetrated with divine love, and lately recovered from the idolatry of the world, well deſerves to be tranſlated.—"I find your whole care and concern at preſent is for converſion: you look at me; and, in your affection, expect much from me:—I fear, I cannot anſwer your expectations.—Small fruits muſt be looked for from my unworthineſs;—Yet, I will make the attempt; for the SUBJECT MATTER is all on my ſide.—Let plauſible arts of ambition be uſed in courts; but when we ſpeak of the Lord God, plainneſs and ſincerity, not the powers of eloquence, ſhould be uſed. Hear, then, things not eloquent, but important; not courtly, but rude and ſimple;—ſo, ſhould the divine goodneſs be celebrated always with artleſs truth.—Hear then an account of ſomething which is felt before it is learnt; and is not collected by a long courſe of ſpeculation, but is imbibed by the ſoul, through the compendium of grace ripening her, as it were all at once.

While I lay in darkneſs and the night of paganiſm, and when I fluctuated uncertain and dubious with wandering ſteps in the ſea of a tempeſtuous age, ignorant of my own life, and alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a harſh and difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain

what divine grace had promiſed,—namely, that a man ſhould be born again; and that, being animated to a new life by the ſalutary waſhing of regeneration*, he ſhould ſtrip himſelf of what he was before, and though the body remained the ſame, he ſhould, in his mind, become altogether a new creature. How can ſo great a change be poſſible, ſaid I,—that a man ſhould ſuddenly and at once put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him. Theſe evils are deeply and cloſely fixed in us. How ſhall he learn parſimony who has been accuſtomed to expenſive and magnificent feaſts? And how ſhall he who has been accuſtomed to purple, gold, and coſtly attire, condeſcend to the ſimplicity of a plebeian habit? Can he who was delighted with the honours of ambition live private and obſcure? Further,—the man has been accuſtomed to crowds of clients and will think ſolitude the moſt dreadful puniſhment.—He muſt ſtill, thought I, be infeſted by tenacious allurements: Drunkenneſs, pride, anger, rapacity, cruelty, ambition, and luſt, muſt ſtill domineer over him.

Theſe reflections paſſed my mind very often; for they were peculiarly applicable to my own caſe. —I was myſelf entangled in many errors of my former life, from which I did not think it poſſible to be cleared: hence, I favoured my vices, and, through deſpair of what was better, I ſtuck cloſe to them as part of my very frame and conſtitution. But after the filth of my former ſins was waſhed away in the laver of regeneration, and divine light, from above, had infuſed itſelf into my heart now purified and cleanſed; after, through the effuſion of the Holy Spirit from heaven, the new birth had made

* An inſtance we have here of the powerful effects of regeneration attending baptiſm in thoſe days.

made me a new creature indeed,—immediately, and in an amazing manner, dubious things began to be cleared up; things once ſhut were opened; dark things ſhone forth; and what before ſeemed difficult and even impoſſible, now appeared eaſy and practicable. I ſaw that, that which was born after the fleſh and had lived enſlaved by wickedneſs, was of the "earth earthy;" but that the new life, now animated by the Holy Ghoſt, began to be of God. You know and recollect as perfectly as I do my converſion from a deadly criminal ſtate to a ſtate of lively virtue:—You know what theſe oppoſite ſtates have done for me:—what they have taken away; and what they have conferred: and, therefore, I need not proclaim it: To boaſt of one's own praiſes is odious; though that cannot be called an expreſſion of boaſting, but of gratitude, which aſcribes nothing to the virtue of man, but profeſſes all to proceed from the gift of God: Thus deliverance from ſin is the conſequence of ſound faith:—The preceding ſinful ſtate was owing to human blindneſs.—Of God it is,—of God, I ſay, even all that we can do:—thence we live;—thence we have ſtrength;—thence we conceive and aſſume vigour; even though, as yet, placed here below, we have ſome marked preſentiments of our future felicity. Only,—let fear be the guardian of innocence; that the Lord, who kindly ſhone into our minds with an effuſion of heavenly grace, may be detained as our gueſt by the ſteady obedience of the ſoul which delights in him,—leſt pardon received ſhould beget a careleſs preſumption, and the old enemy break in afreſh.

But if you keep the road of innocence and of righteouſneſs, if you walk with footſteps that do not ſlide,—if, depending upon God with all your heart and with all your might, you be only what

you have begun to be, you will then find, that according to the proportion of faith, ſo will your attainments and enjoyments be. For no bound or meaſure can be aſſigned in the reception of divine grace, as is the caſe of earthly benefits. The Holy Spirit is poured forth profuſely; is confined by no limits; is reſtrained by no barriers; he flows perpetually; he beſtows in rich abundance: Let our heart only thirſt and be open to receive him: As much of capacious faith as we bring, ſo much abounding grace do we draw from him. Hence an ability is given, with ſober chaſtity, uprightneſs of mind, and purity of language, to heal the ſick, to extinguiſh the force of poiſon, to cleanſe the filth of diſtempered minds, to ſpeak peace to the hoſtile; to give tranquillity to the violent, and gentleneſs to the fierce; to compel, by menaces, unclean and wandering ſpirits to quit their hold of men; to ſcourge and controul the foe, and, by torments to bring him to confeſs what he is.—Thus, in what we have already begun to be, the ſpirit received enjoys its liberty: though, till we have changed our body and members, the proſpect, as yet carnal, is obſcured by the cloud of the world. What a power, what an energy is this!—that the ſoul ſhould not only be emancipated from ſlavery, and be made free and pure; but alſo ſtronger and more powerful, ſo as to become victorious and triumphant over the powers of the enemy!"

The teſtimony here given to the ejection of evil ſpirits, as a common thing among the Chriſtians, even in the third century, deſerves to be noticed, as a proof that miraculous influences had not ceaſed in the Church. Minutius Felix ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, and I think with more preciſion. "Being adjured by the living God, they tremble

tremble and remain wretched and reluctant in the bodies of men: they either leap out immediately, or vaniſh by degrees, as the faith of the patient or the grace of the perſon adminiſtering relief may be ſtrong or weak."—Indeed the teſtimony of the Fathers in theſe times is ſo general and concurrent, that the fact itſelf cannot be denied without univerſally impeaching their veracity. It is not my province to dwell on this point: The ſanctifying graces of the Spirit call for my particular attention; and theſe are deſcribed by Cyprian as by one who had ſeen and taſted them. No doubt, after his converſion, he experienced in himſelf vital, energetic and divine principles, far beyond the reach of ordinary rational proceſſes;—and he appeals to his friend Donatus if he had not alſo felt the ſame.

We may ſafely, therefore, infer that ſuch things were then not infrequent among Chriſtians, though, certainly, the EFFUSIONS of the Holy Ghoſt did not ſo much abound as in the two former centuries.—Indeed what but the power of God on the heart can account for a change ſo ſudden, ſo rapid, and yet ſo firm and ſolid, as that of Cyprian? What can be conceived more oppoſite than the laſt thirteen years of his life compared with the former part of it?—Will modern faſtidiouſneſs call all this Enthuſiaſm?

In this narrative, the reader will notice, that the eſſential doctrines of juſtification and regeneration by divine grace were not only believed but experienced by this zealous African.—The difference between mere human and divine teaching is rendered ſtriking by ſuch caſes. With no great furniture of learning, it was HIS happineſs to know little, if any thing, of the then reigning philoſophy.—We ſee a man of buſineſs and of the world riſing at once a Phœnix in the Church; and though no extraordinary Theologian in point

of accurate knowledge, yet an uſeful practical Divine, an accompliſhed Paſtor, flaming with the love of God and of ſouls, and with unremitted activity ſpending and being ſpent for Chriſt Jeſus. —This is the Lord's doing; and it ſhould be remarked as HIS WORK.—We ſhall ſee that Cyprian's own converſion prepared him for actual ſervice.—Argument and diſpute prevailed among Chriſtians in the Eaſt;—brotherly love in the Weſt.

He ſeems to record a remarkable influence of Divine Grace as having accompaned his baptiſm. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that this was commonly the caſe at that time: The inward and ſpiritual grace really attended the outward and viſible ſign. And it is to be lamented, that the corruption and perverſion of after-ages, availing itſelf of the ambiguous language of the fathers on this ſubject,—which, with them, was natural enough,—ſuppoſed a NECESSARY connexion to take place where there had been a frequent one. In Cyprian's time to call baptiſm itſelf the new birth was not very dangerous: In our age it is poiſon itſelf: Men are apt to content themſelves with the outward and viſible ſign; and it has long been the faſhion to ſuppoſe all perſons, who have been baptiſed when they were infants, to be, of courſe, when they are grown up, in a ſtate of regeneration by the Holy Spirit: and thus men have learned to furniſh themſelves with a convenient evaſion of all that is written in Scripture concerning the godly motions of the third perſon of the ſacred Trinity.

Cyprian goes on,—"And that the marks of divine goodneſs may appear the more perſpicuouſly by a diſcovery of the truth, I would lay open to your view the real ſtate of the world;—I would remove the thick darkneſs which covers it, and deteſt the hidden miſchiefs and the evils which it contains.

contains.—For a little time, fancy yourſelf withdrawn to the top of a high mountain;—thence inſpect the appearance of things below you; look all around;—preſerve yourſelf unfettered by worldly connexions,—obſerve the fluctuating tempeſts of the world;—you will then pity mankind; you will underſtand and be ſenſible of your own happineſs;—you will be more thankful to God; and, with more joy, you will congratulate yourſelf on your eſcape."

He then gives an affecting view of the immenſity of evils which the ſtate of mankind at that time exhibited; and graphically delineates the miſeries of public and of private life; after which he returns to the deſcription of the bleſſings of true Chriſtianity.

"The only placid and ſound tranquility," ſays he, "the only ſolid, firm, and perpetual ſecurity is, to be delivered from the tempeſts of this reſtleſs ſcene, to be ſtationed in the port of ſalvation; to lift up the eyes from earth to heaven, and to be admitted into the favour of the Lord: Such a man approaches, in his thoughts, near to his God; and juſtly glories, that whatever others deem ſublime and great in human affairs,—is abſolutely beneath his notice. He, who is greater than the world, can deſire nothing, can want nothing from the world. What an unſhaken protection; what a truly divine ſhelter fraught with eternal good, it muſt be, to be looſed from the ſnares of an entangling world, to be purged from earthly dregs, and to be wafted into the light of immortal day! When we ſee what the inſidious rage of a deſtructive enemy was plotting againſt us;—certainly, we muſt be the more compelled to love what we ſhall be, becauſe we have now learned both to know and to condemn what we were. Nor is there, for

this end, any need of price, of canvaſſing, or of manual labour: This complete dignity or power of man is not to be acquired by elaborate efforts: The gift of God is gratuitous and eaſy. As the ſun ſhines freely, as the fountain bubbles, as the rain bedews, ſo the Celeſtial Spirit infuſes himſelf. The ſoul looks up to heaven and becomes conſcious of its Author: It then begins actually to be what it believes itſelf to be: It is higher than the firmament, and ſublimer than all earthly power. Only,—do you, whom the heavenly warfare hath marked for divine ſervice, preſerve untainted and ſober your Chriſtian courſe by the virtues of religion. Let prayer or reading be your aſſiduous employment: Sometimes ſpeak with God: At other times hear him ſpeak to you: Let him inſtruct you by his precepts; let him regulate you: Whom he hath made rich, none ſhall make poor. There can be no penury with him whoſe heart has once been enriched with celeſtial bounty. Roofs arched with gold, and houſes inlaid with marble, will be vile in your eyes, when you know that your own minds are rather to be cultivated and adorned: That this houſe is more valuable which the Lord has choſen to be his temple, in which the Holy Ghoſt has begun to dwell. Let us adorn this houſe with the paintings of innocence, let us illuminate it with the light of righteouſneſs. This will never fall into ruin through the decays of age: Its ornaments ſhall never fade. Whatever is not genuine is precarious, and affords to the poſſeſſor no ſure foundation. This remains in its culture perpetually vivid; in honour, and in ſplendor, ſpotleſs and eternal: It can neither be aboliſhed nor extinguiſhed.—Is it then capable of no alteration? —Yes,—It will receive a rich improvement at the reſurrection of the body.

Let

Let us be careful how we ſpend our time: let us rejoice; but let not an hour of entertainment be inconſiſtent or unconnected with divine grace. Let the ſober banquet reſound with PSALMS; and as your memory is good, and voice harmonious, perform this office,—as I believe you do.—It will be more than agreeable,—it will be delightful,—to your dear friends to hear of your ſpiritual and religious harmony."

In all this the intelligent reader ſees the picture of an active Chriſtian,—poſſeſſed of ſome rich portion of that effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt which, from the Apoſtles' days, ſtill exhibited Chriſt Jeſus,—and fitted by experience to communicate to others the real Goſpel, and to be an happy inſtrument of guiding ſouls to that reſt which remains for the people of God.

CHAP. VIII.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS.—THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRIAN TILL HIS RETIREMENT.

HOW Cyprian conducted himſelf in his biſhopric, who is ſufficient to relate? ſays Pontius, in the fulneſs of his admiration. Some PARTICULAR account however might have been expected from one who had ſuch large opportunity of information. He does make ſome brief obſervations on his external appearance. "His looks had the due mixture of gravity and cheerfulneſs; ſo that it was doubtful whether he was more worthy of love or of reverence. His dreſs alſo was correſpondent to his looks: He had renounced the ſecular pomp to which his rank in life entitled him;—yet he avoided affected penury."—From a man of Cyprian's piety and good ſenſe united, ſuch a conduct might be expected.

While Cyprian was labouring to recover the ſpirit of godlineſs among the Africans, which long peace had corrupted, Philip was ſlain and ſucceeded by Decius. His enmity to the former emperor conſpired with his pagan prejudices to bring on the moſt dreadful perſecution which the Church had yet experienced. It was evident that nothing leſs than the deſtruction of the Chriſtian name was intended. The chronology is here remarkably embarraſſed; nor is it an object of much conſequence

conſequence to trouble either myſelf or the reader with ſtudious attempts to ſettle it. Suffice it to ſay that the eventful period before us of Cyprian's biſhopric extends from the year two hundred and forty-eight to two hundred and ſixty, and that Decius's ſucceſſion to the empire muſt have taken place toward the beginning of it. The perſecution raged with aſtoniſhing fury, beyond the example of former perſecutions, both in the Eaſt and Weſt. The latter is the ſcene before us at preſent. In a treatiſe of Cyprian concerning the lapſed*, we have an affecting account of the declenſion from the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, which had taken place before his converſion, and which moved God to chaſtiſe his Church. "If the cauſe of our miſeries," ſays he, "be inveſtigated, the cure of the wound may be found. The Lord would have his family to be TRIED. And becauſe long peace had corrupted the diſcipline divinely revealed to us, the heavenly chaſtiſement hath raiſed up our faith which had lain almoſt dormant: and when, by our ſins, we had deſerved to ſuffer ſtill more, the merciful Lord ſo moderated all things, that the whole ſcene rather deſerves the name of a trial than a perſecution. Each had been bent on improving his patrimony; and had forgotten what believers had done under the Apoſtles, and what they ought always to do: —They were brooding over the arts of amaſſing wealth:—The paſtors and the deacons each forgat their duty: Works of mercy were neglected, and diſcipline was at the loweſt ebb.—Luxury and effeminacy prevailed: Meretricious arts in dreſs were cultivated: Fraud and deceit were practiſed among brethren.—Chriſtians could unite themſelves in matrimony with unbelievers; could ſwear not

A. D. 248. to 260.

* Section 4

not only without reverence, but even without veracity. With haughty aſperity they deſpiſed their eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors: They railed againſt one another with outrageous acrimony, and conducted quarrels with determined malice:—Even many biſhops, who ought to be guides and patterns to the reſt, neglecting the peculiar duties of their ſtations, gave themſelves up to ſecular purſuits:—They deſerted their places of reſidence and their flocks: They travelled through diſtant provinces in queſt of pleaſure and gain; gave no aſſiſtance to the needy brethren; but were inſatiable in their thirſt of money:—They poſſeſſed eſtates by fraud, and multiplied uſury. What have we not deſerved to ſuffer for ſuch a conduct? Even the Divine Word hath foretold us what we might expect, "IF HIS CHILDREN FORSAKE MY LAW, AND WALK NOT IN MY JUDGMENTS, I WILL VISIT THEIR OFFENCES WITH THE ROD, AND THEIR SIN WITH SCOURGES." Theſe things had been denounced and foretold, but in vain: Our ſins had brought our affairs to that paſs, that becauſe we had deſpiſed the Lord's directions, we were obliged to undergo a correction of our multiplied evils and a trial of our faith by ſevere remedies."

That a deep declenſion from Chriſtian purity had taken place not only in the Eaſt, where falſe philoſophy aided its progreſs as we have ſeen, but alſo in the Weſt, where the operation of no peculiar cauſe can be traced beyond the common influence of proſperity on human depravity, is now completely evident from this account of Cyprian: and,—it deſerves to be remarked, that the firſt grand and general declenſion, after the primary EFFUSION of the Divine Spirit, ſhould be fixed about the middle of this century. The wiſdom and

and goodneſs of God is alſo to be obſerved in qualifying the biſhop of Carthage by a ſtrong perſonal work on his own heart; and then, in raiſing him to the See of Carthage to ſuperintend the weſtern part of his Church in a time of trial like the preſent. The trial, no doubt, was kindly intended by Providence to operate as a medicine for the revival of the declining ſpirit of Chriſtianity; but it needed, nevertheleſs, all that fortitude, zeal, and wiſdom with which Cyprian was ſo eminently endowed.

In ſuch a ſituation it was not to be expected that the people under the biſhop's care ſhould, in general, ſtand their ground: avarice had taken deep root among them; and vaſt numbers lapſed into idolatry immediately. Even before men were accuſed as Chriſtians, "many ran to the forum and ſacrificed to the gods as they were ordered; and the crowds of apoſtates were ſo great * that the magiſtrates wiſhed to delay numbers of them till the next day, but they were importuned by the wretched ſuppliants to be allowed to prove themſelves heathens that very night."

At Rome the perſecution raged with unremitting violence. There Fabian the biſhop ſuffered; and, for ſome time, it became impracticable to elect a ſucceſſor: yet, it does not appear that the metropolis ſuffered more, in proportion, than ſome other places, ſince we find that the flame of perſecution had driven ſeveral biſhops from diſtant provinces, and made them fly for ſhelter to Rome†. Cyprian, however, having been regularly informed by the Roman clergy of the martyrdom of their biſhop, congratulated them on his glorious exit ‡, and exulted on occaſion of his uprightneſs and integrity. He expreſſes the pleaſure he conceived in

* Cypri. delapſis. † Ep. 31. ‡ Ep. 4.

in obſerving that his edifying example had ſo much penetrated their minds; and owns the energy which he himſelf felt to imitate the pattern.

Moyſes and Maximus, two Roman preſbyters, with other confeſſors, were alſo ſeized and impriſoned. Attempts were repeatedly made to perſuade them to relinquiſh the faith, but in vain. Cyprian found means to write to THEM ALSO a letter full of benevolence and breathing the ſtrongeſt pathos *. He tells them that his heart was with them continually,—that he prayed for them in his public miniſtry,—and in private. He comforts them under the preſſures of hunger and thirſt which they endured, and congratulates them for living now not for this life but for the next; and particularly, becauſe their example would be a means of confirming many who were in a wavering ſtate.—But Carthage ſoon became an unſafe ſcene to Cyprian himſelf.—By repeated ſuffrages of the people at the theatre he was demanded to be taken and given to the lions; and it behoved him immediately either to retire into a place of ſafety, or to expect the crown of martyrdom.

Cyprian's ſpirit in interpreting Scripture was more ſimple, and more accommodated to receive its plain and obvious ſenſe, than that of men who had learned to refine and ſubtilize. He knew the liberty which his Divine Maſter had given to his people—of fleeing when they were perſecuted in one city, to another;—and he embraced it. Nay, he ſeems ſcarcely to have thought it lawful to do otherwiſe.—Even the laſt ſtate of his martyrdom evinces this.—His manner of enduring it, when it, providentially, was brought on him, ſufficiently acquits him of all ſuſpicion of puſillanimity.—To unite ſuch ſeemingly oppoſite things as diſcretion

* Ep. 16.

tion and fortitude, each in a very high degree, is a ſure characteriſtic of greatneſs in a Chriſtian:—It is grace in its higheſt exerciſe.—Pontius thinks it was not without a particular divine direction that he was moved to act in this manner for the benefit of the Church.

Behold him at preſent, in ſome place of retreat, under the protection of God and through the love of his people ſafe for the ſpace of two years from the arm of a moſt barbarous perſecution;—and let us next ſee how he employed this interval of retirement.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THE HISTORY OF CYPRIAN AND OF THE WESTERN CHURCH DURING HIS RETIREMENT OF TWO YEARS.

CYPRIAN was never more active than in his retreat. Nothing of moment occurred in eccleſiaſtical affairs either in Africa or in Italy with which he was unacquainted; and his counſels, under God, were of the greateſt influence in both countries. I ſhall endeavour to abbreviate the account from his own letters which were written in this period.

The preſbyters of Carthage ſent Clementius, a ſub-deacon, to Rome, from whom the Roman clergy learnt the place of the retreat of the biſhop. They, in return, expreſs to the Africans their perfect agreement in opinion concerning the propriety of the concealment, becauſe he was an eminent character, and a life extremely valuable to the Church. They repreſent the conflict as very important, which God had now permitted for the trial of his ſervants: They ſaid, it was the expreſs purpoſe of God to manifeſt both to angels and to men, that the conqueror ſhall be crowned, and the conquered, that is, the faithleſs apoſtate, be ſelf-condemned. They expreſs the deep ſenſe which they had both of their own ſituation and that of the clergy of Carthage, whoſe duty it was to take care not to incur the cenſure paſſed on faithleſs

faithleſs ſhepherds in the prophet *, but rather to imitate their Lord the good ſhepherd, who laid down his life for the ſheep†, and who ſo earneſtly and repeatedly charges Simon Peter, as a proof of his love to his Maſter, "to feed his ſheep‡." "We would not wiſh, dear brethren," ſay they, "to find you mere mercenaries, but good ſhepherds, ſince you know it muſt be highly ſinful in you not to exhort the brethren to ſtand immoveable in the faith, leſt they be totally ſubverted by idolatry. Nor do we only in words thus exhort you; but, as you may learn from many who came from us to you, our actions, with the help of God, accord with our declarations: we make no ſcruple to hazard our lives; for we have before our eyes the fear of God and of eternal puniſhment, rather than the fear of men and of a temporary calamity: we do not deſert the brethren; we exhort them to ſtand in the faith, and to be ready to follow their Lord when called: We have alſo done our utmoſt to recover thoſe who had gone up to ſacrifice in order that they might ſave their lives. Our Church ſtands firm in the faith in general: Some indeed, overcome by terror, either becauſe they were perſons in high life or were moved by the fear of man, have lapſed; yet theſe, though ſeparated from us, we do not give up as loſt altogether, but we exhort them to repent, if they may find mercy with him who is able to ſave: we would not, by abandoning them, render their caſe hopeleſs and incurable.

We wiſh you, brethren, to act in the ſame manner, as much as in you lies:—Exhort the lapſed, if they ſhould be ſeized a ſecond time, to confeſs their Saviour. And we ſuggeſt to you to receive

* Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4. † John x. ‡ John xxi.

receive again into communion any of theſe, if they heartily deſire it, and give proofs of ſound repentance. And, certainly, officers ſhould be appointed to miniſter to the widows, the ſick, thoſe in priſon, and thoſe who are in a ſtate of baniſhment. A ſpecial care ſhould be exerciſed over the catechumens, to preſerve them from apoſtacy; and thoſe, whoſe duty it is to inter the dead, ought to conſider the interment of the martyrs as matter of indiſpenſable obligation.

Sure we are, that thoſe ſervants, who ſhall be found to have been thus faithful in that which is leaſt, will have "authority over ten cities*." May God, who does all things for thoſe who hope in him, grant, that we may all be found thus diligently employed! The brethren in bonds, the clergy, and the whole Church ſalute you: We all of us with earneſt ſolicitude watch and pray for all who call on the name of the Lord. And we beſeech you, in return, to be mindful of us alſo in your prayers."

Several obſervations preſent themſelves on this occaſion. 1. It appears, that, both at Rome and Carthage, the reduced mode of epiſcopacy was the form of eccleſiaſtical government which gradually prevailed in the Chriſtian world. It is not to be ſuppoſed that the whole body of Chriſtians either at Rome, or at Carthage, was no more than what might be contained in one aſſembly.—The inference is obvious.

2. The Roman Church appears, in the beginning of Decius's perſecution at leaſt, to have been in a much more thriving ſtate than that of Carthage, and their clergy to have been models worthy of imitation in all ages.

3. The adminiſtration of diſcipline among the Chriſtians,

* Luke xix. 19.

Chriſtians, wiſely tempered by tenderneſs and ſtrictneſs, is truly admirable.

4. The work of the divine Spirit alſo amongſt them, infuſing the largeſt charity, even to the laying down of their lives for the brethren, is manifeſt beyond contradiction.—Now mark the ſpirit of a primitive paſtor, full of charity and meekneſs, of zeal and prudence, in the following letter of Cyprian to his clergy.

"Being hitherto preſerved by the favour of God, I ſalute you, deareſt brethren, and I rejoice to hear of your ſafety. As preſent circumſtances permit not my preſence among you, I beg you, by your faith and by the tyes of religion, to diſcharge your duties, in conjunction with mine alſo, that nothing be wanting either on the head of diſcipline or of diligence. I beg that nothing may be wanting to ſupply the neceſſities of thoſe, who are impriſoned becauſe of their glorious profeſſion and avowal of God, or who labour under the preſſures of indigence and poverty, ſince the whole eccleſiaſtical fund is in the hands of the clergy for this very purpoſe, that a number may have it in their power to relieve the wants of individuals.

I beg further, that you would uſe every prudential and cautious method to procure the peace of the Church; and if the brethren, in their charity, wiſh to confer with and to viſit thoſe pious ſuffering profeſſors, whom the divine goodneſs hath thus far ſhone upon by ſuch good beginnings, they would, however, do this cautiouſly, not in crowds, nor in a multitude; leſt any odium ſhould hence ariſe, and the liberty of admiſſion be denied altogether; and leſt while, through greedineſs, we aim at too much, we loſe all. Conſult therefore and provide, that this may

be done ſafely and with diſcretion; ſo that the preſbyters one by one, accompanied by the deacons in turn, may ſucceſſively miniſter to them, becauſe the change of perſons viſiting them is leſs liable to breed ſuſpicion. For, in all things we ought to be meek and humble, as becomes the ſervants of God, to redeem the time, to have a regard for peace, and to provide for the people. Moſt dearly beloved and longed-for, I wiſh you all proſperity, and intreat you to remember us. Salute all the brethren. Victor the deacon, and thoſe that are with us, ſalute you*."

The defection of ſuch numbers muſt have penetrated deeply the fervent and charitable ſpirit of Cyprian. Not only very many of the laity, but part of the clergy alſo had been ſeduced. "I could have wiſhed," † ſays he, "deareſt brethren, to have had it in my power to ſalute your whole body ſound and intire; but as the melancholy tempeſt has, in addition to the fall of ſo many of the people, alſo affected part of the clergy,—ſad accumulation of our ſorrow! we pray the Lord, that, by divine mercy, we may be enabled to ſalute YOU at leaſt,—whom we have known hitherto to ſtand firm in faith and virtue,—as ſound and unſhaken followers of Chriſt for the time to come.—Though the cauſe loudly called on me to haſten my return to you; firſt, on account of my own deſire and regret for the loſs of your company,—a deſire which burns ſtrongly within me;—in the next place, that we might, in full council, ſettle the various objects in the Church which require attention; yet, on the whole, to remain ſtill concealed ſeemed more adviſable on account of other advantages which pertain to the general ſafety, an account of which our dear brother Tertullus will give

* Epiſ. 4. † Epiſ. 5.

give you; who, agreeably to that care which he employs in divine works with ſo much zeal, was alſo the adviſer of this counſel, that I ſhould act with caution and moderation, and not raſhly commit myſelf to the public view in a place where I had ſo often been ſought and called for.

Relying therefore on your affection and conſcientiouſneſs, of which I have had good experience, I exhort and charge you by theſe letters, that you, whoſe ſituation is leſs dangerous and invidious, would ſupply my lack of ſervice. Let the poor be attended to as much as poſſible,—thoſe I mean, who have ſtood the teſt of perſecution: ſuffer them not to want neceſſaries; leſt indigence do that againſt them which perſecution could not. I know the charity of the brethren has provided for very many of them:—yet,—as I wrote to you before, even while they were in priſon,—if any perſons do want meat or clothing*, let their neceſſities be ſupplied."

In the ſequel of this epiſtle, he ſhews a deep knowledge of the depravity of the human heart, which is very apt to be puffed up with vain-glory and ſelf-conceit, on the conſciouſneſs of having well performed our part in any reſpect. I cannot forbear tranſcribing the following practical rules of humility.

"Let them know,—that they muſt be inſtructed and taught by YOU;—that the doctrines of Scripture require ſubordination in the people to their paſtors;—that they ſhould cultivate a humble, modeſt, and peaceable demeanour;—and that thoſe who have been gloriouſly bold in the avowal of their faith, ſhould be equally exemplary in all the branches of Chriſtian conduct.—The harder trial yet remains:—The Lord ſaith, "He that endureth

* It hence appears that a number of them had been releaſed.

dureth to the end, the ſame ſhall be ſaved *." Let them imitate the Lord, whoſe humility never ſhone more than at the eve of his paſſion, when he waſhed his diſciples' feet. The Apoſtle Paul too, after repeated ſufferings, ſtill continued mild and humble. His elevation to the third heaven begat in him no arrogance; neither, ſays he, " did we eat any man's bread for nought, but laboured and travailed night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you †."

All theſe duties do you inſtill into the minds of the brethren: and,—becauſe he, who humbles himſelf, ſhall be exalted,—now is the time more particularly that they ſhould fear the ſnares of the enemy of ſouls, who loves to attack even the ſtrongeſt, and to revenge the diſgrace which he has already ſuſtained from them. The Lord grant that, in due ſeaſon, I may be enabled to viſit my people again; and to exhort them to uſeful purpoſe. For I am grieved to hear that ſome of them run about idly, fooliſhly, and inſolently; or give themſelves up to ſtrife; and even pollute, by fornication, thoſe members which had confeſſed Chriſt; and are not willing to be ſubject to the deacons or preſbyters, but ſeem to act as if they intended, by the bad conduct of a few profeſſors, to bring diſgrace on the whole body. He is a true profeſſor indeed, on account of whom the Church need not bluſh, but glory.

To the point, concerning which certain preſbyters wrote to me, I can anſwer nothing alone; for, from the beginning of my appointment to this See, I determined to do nothing without your conſent and the conſent of the people. But when, by the favour of God, I ſhall have returned to you, —we will treat in common of all things."

In

* Matthew x. 22. † 2 Theſſ. iii. 8.

In * the next letter he dwells on the ſame ſubject, namely, the ill conduct of ſome of the confeſſors.—The uſe of good diſcipline in the Church of God,—the benefits of orderly ſubjection in the members,—the danger of pride and ſelf-exaltation; and—the deceitfulneſs of the human heart, are well ſtated, and in exceeding ſtrong terms.

After having congratulated his people on the ſteadineſs of their confeſſion, he reminds them of the neceſſity of perſeverance, ſince faith itſelf and the new birth conduct us to life eternal, not merely as once received, but as preſerved. He reminds them, that the Lord regards him that is poor and of a contrite ſpirit, and that trembles at his words;—and he rejoices to find that the greateſt part of the confeſſors thus adorned the Goſpel. —But he had heard that ſome of them were puffed up: To theſe he exhibits the mild, charitable, and humble ſpirit of the Lamb of God: "And dare," ſays he, "any one, who now lives by HIM and in HIM, to lift himſelf up with pride?—He that is leaſt among you, the ſame ſhall be great. How execrable ought thoſe immoralities and indecencies to appear among you, which we have heard of with the deepeſt ſorrow of heart!"—He then repeats what he had before mentioned of the laſciviouſneſs of ſome.

"Contentions and ſtrifes ought to have no place among you, ſince the Lord has left us his peace. I beſeech you abſtain from reproaches and abuſe;—for he who ſpeaks what is peaceable, and good, and juſt, according to the precepts of Chriſt, daily imitates his Lord and Maſter.—We renounced the world when we were baptized; but now we truly and in deed renounce the world, when,

* Epiſ. 6. ad Rogatianum preſbyteram et ceteros confeſſores.

when, upon being tried and proved by God, we ſcruple not to give up our own wills; to follow the Lord; and to ſtand and live in his faith and fear. Let us ſtrengthen one another with mutual exhortations, and ſtrive to grow in the Lord;—that when, in his mercy, he ſhall give us that peace and tranquillity which he has promiſed, we may return to the Church as new men;—and that both our brethren and the gentiles may receive us improved in holy conduct; and may admire the excellency of the morals and diſcipline of thoſe very Chriſtians, who had aſtoniſhed them by their fortitude during the perſecution."

The mind of Cyprian, full of the fear of God, and reflecting, from a compariſon of Chriſtian precepts with the practice of profeſſors, how exceedingly his people had provoked the Lord before the perſecution, was vehemently incited to ſtir them up to repentance.—He addreſſes them from his receſs *, as follows.—"Though I am ſenſible, deareſt brethren, that as we all live in the obedient fear of God, you are inſtant in prayers, yet I alſo admoniſh you that we ought to breathe out our ſouls to God, not only in words, but alſo in faſting, tears, and every method of ſupplication. In truth, we muſt underſtand and confeſs that the apoſtacy which, in ſo large a degree, has waſted our flock and ſtill waſtes it, is the proper conſequence of our ſins."

He then goes on to ſpeak of their practical corruptions, as he does in his treatiſe concerning the lapſed. "And what plagues, what ſtripes do we not deſerve, ſince even confeſſors, who ought to be patterns to the reſt, are quite diſorderly! Hence, while the proud and indecent boaſting of their confeſſion puffs up ſome, torments have come upon us,

* Epiſ. 7.

us, and torments unremitted;—tedious and moſt diſtreſſing; and ſo protracted as to exclude even the comfort of death itſelf!"

"Let us pray with our whole heart for mercy: and if the anſwer to our prayers be ſlow, becauſe we have deeply offended;—let us knock; for to him that knocketh it ſhall be opened, when prayers, groans, and tears beat at the door."—He then records ſome viſions;—which, as they rather ſuit the diſpenſation of that age in which miracles were by no means wanting, I paſs over.

"Our Maſter himſelf prayed for us; becauſe though himſelf no ſinner, yet he bore our ſins. And if HE laboured and watched on account of us and of our ſins, how much more ſhould WE be urgent in prayer? Brethren—let us firſt intreat our Lord himſelf, and then through him we may obtain favour with God the Father. The Father himſelf corrects and takes care of us, in the midſt of all preſſures, provided we remain firm in the faith, and ſtick cloſe to his Chriſt;—as it is written, "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword?" None of theſe can ſeparate believers: Nothing can pluck away thoſe, who adhere cloſely to his body and blood.—Perſecution is the examination and trial of our heart. God would have us to be ſifted and tried; nor was ever his help wanting in trials to thoſe who believe. Let our eyes be liſted up to heaven, leſt earth with its inticements deceive us. If the Lord ſee us humble and quiet, lovingly united, and corrected by the preſent tribulation, he will deliver us. Correction has come firſt; pardon will follow: Let us only continue to pray in ſteady faith; and to behave like men placed between the ruins of the fallen, and the

remains

remains of thoſe who are in fear,—between a multitude of the ſick, and the few who have eſcaped a devouring peſtilence."

The perſecution at Carthage, hence, appears to have been very dreadful; but moſtly ſo on account of the number of apoſtates: The Chriſtian faith, patience, and magnanimity of Cyprian and of a ſmall remnant were in full exerciſe.

The perſecutors endeavoured to leſſen the number of Chriſtians by baniſhing from Carthage all thoſe who confeſſed Chriſt: but this not anſwering their purpoſe, they proceeded to cruel torments. Cyprian, hearing that ſome had expired under their ſufferings, and that others were ſtill in priſon yet alive, wrote to theſe laſt a letter of encouragement and conſolation. Their limbs had been ſorely mangled and torn, ſo that they appeared like one continued wound; yet they remained firm in the faith and love of Jeſus. One of them, Mappalicus, amidſt his torments, ſaid to the proconſul, "To morrow you ſhall ſee a conteſt for a prize."—He alluded to the crown of martyrdom; and, what he uttered in faith, the Lord fulfilled:—He loſt his life in the conflict on the next day*.

So keenly was the mind of Cyprian fixed on heavenly things; and ſo completely lifted up above the world, that he ardently exulted and triumphed amidſt thoſe ſcenes of horror. He deſcribes the martyrs and confeſſors as wiping away the tears of the Church, while ſhe was bewailing the ruins of her ſons. He repreſents even Chriſt himſelf as looking down with complacency; fighting and conquering in his ſervants; and giving ſtrength to believers in proportion to their faith:—"He was preſent in the conteſt," ſays he, "He encouraged, corroborated, animated his warriors. And he, who once

* Epiſ. 8.

once conquered death FOR us, always conquers IN us." Toward the close of his epistle he consoles, with suitable arguments, those, who had not yet been crowned with martyrdom, but were prepared for it in spirit.

The joy of Cyprian, on account of the faithfulness of the martyrs, was, however, considerably damped by the disorderly conduct, which began to take place in his absence. Those, who had suffered tortures for Christ, and were on the point of martyrdom, and to whom it was usual to make application for the presentation of petitions, wrote to him and requested, that the consideration of the cases of lapsed Christians might be deferred till the persecution was stopped, and the bishop was restored to his Church. In the mean time, several of these lapsed brethren offered themselves to certain presbyters of Carthage to be received again into communion; and they were actually re-admitted to the Lord's supper without any just evidence of their repentance.—The bishop dissembled not his displeasure on this occasion: He confessed, he had long born with these disorders for the sake of peace, till he thought it his duty to bear with them no longer:—He said, "that it was quite unprecedented to transact these things without the consent of the bishop*:—and that,—even in lesser offences, a regular time of penitence was exacted of the members;—a certain course of discipline took place,—they made open confession of their sins, and were re-admitted to communion by the imposition of hands of the bishop and his clergy."—He directs, that the irregular practice might be stopped, till, on his return, every thing should be settled with propriety.

Some

* A further confirmation of the antiquity of the reduced episcopal mode of government in the Church of Christ.

Some of the martyrs themſelves, it appears *, acted very inconſiderately in this buſineſs, and gave to lapſed perſons recommendatory papers, conceived in general terms. Cyprian wiſhes them to expreſs the NAMES of the perſons, and to give no ſuch recommendations to any but thoſe, of whoſe ſincere repentance they had ſome good proof; and even in that caſe to refer the ultimate cognizance of ſuch matters to the biſhop.

Every thing has two handles. Cyprian † has been repreſented as ſtretching the epiſcopal power beyond its due bounds. I ſee no evidence that he exceeded the powers of his predeceſſors. A pious care for the good of ſouls,—not any ambition for the extenſion of his own authority, ſeems to influence his mind in theſe affairs;—but of this, the learned reader muſt judge for himſelf, who will take the pains to examine his epiſtles with attention. Let any man peruſe the following letter; and conſult his own heart as he goes along, whether it be the language of a tender father of the Church, or of an imperious lord.

CYPRIAN TO THE BRETHREN OF THE LAITY, GREETING.

I know from my own feelings, deareſt brethren, that you muſt grieve, and bitterly bewail over the ruins of our people, as I ſincerely do join with you in ſad grief and lamentation for every one of them: I experience the truth of what the bleſſed Apoſtle ſaid, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" and again, "If one member ſuffer, all the members ſuffer with it." I ſympathize and condole with our

* Epiſ. 10. † Moſheim—Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory.

our brethren, who have lapſed through the violence of perſecution: It is true, their wounds give me the moſt acute pain: they abſolutely break my heart; but, divine grace can heal them. —Still I think we ſhould not be in a hurry; nor do any thing incautiouſly and precipitately; leſt, while we raſhly re-admit them into communion, the divine diſpleaſure be more grievouſly incurred. The bleſſed martyrs have written to us, "begging that their petitions in favour of the lapſed, may be examined, when the Lord ſhall vouchſafe peace to us, and we ſhall be able to return to the Church."—Certainly THEN every caſe ſhall be examined in your own preſence and with the concurrence of your own judgments.—But I hear that ſome preſbyters,—neither mindful of the Goſpel itſelf,—nor conſidering what the martyrs have written to us,—and in contempt of the epiſcopal authority, have already begun to communicate with the lapſed, and to adminiſter the Lord's ſupper to them, in defiance of that legitimate order by which alone re-admiſſions are ever to be regulated. For, if in leſſer faults this diſcipline ſhould be obſerved, much more ought it in evils, like theſe, which radically affect Chriſtian profeſſion itſelf. Our preſbyters and deacons are bound to admoniſh the people in this matter, that they may cheriſh the ſheep intruſted to them, and inſtruct them in the way of imploring mercy by the divine rules.—I have too good an opinion of the peaceable and humble diſpoſition of our people to believe that they would have ventured to take ſuch a ſtep, had they not been ſeduced by the adulatory arts of ſome of the clergy.

Do you, then, take care of each of them; and, by your judgment and moderation, according to the ſacred precepts, moderate the ſpirits of the lapſed:

lapſed: let none pluck off fruit, as yet unripe, with improvident precipitation: let none commit a veſſel again to the deep, ſhattered already and leaky, till it be carefully re-fitted: let none put on his tattered garment, till he ſee it thoroughly repaired.—I beſeech THEM alſo to attend to this advice, and to expect our return;—that when we ſhall come to you,—by the mercy of God,—we may, with the concurrence of other biſhops examine the letters and the petitions of the martyrs in the preſence of the confeſſors according to the will of the Lord."

It is, hence, obſervable that perſons, whoſe religion had more of form than ſincerity, and whoſe conſciences were not altogether ſeared, acted in the ſame manner then as ſuch do now;—that is, they were more haſty to gain the good will of men than of their Maker. They were ambitious of the favour of the martyrs of thoſe times, who were unqueſtionably ſound and pious Chriſtians; and we ſhall ſee ſoon ſtill ſtronger proof, that even men of eminent godlineſs are ſometimes too apt to repay, with conceſſions of a dangerous nature, the profeſſions of reſpect made to them by ambiguous characters. The Lord's ſupper was then, as it is now, made by ſome an engine of ſelf-righteous formality. And it is in caſes of this nature that wholeſome Church-diſcipline is very precious. The danger of falſe healing juſtly appeared great to Cyprian, nor can any thing be conceived more proper than the delay which he directed. Yet as the time was protracted to a more diſtant period than he expected, and as he was afraid that the ſickly ſeaſon of the hot weather might carry off ſome of the lapſed, he directs, in a ſubſequent letter*, "that any of the lapſed penitents whoſe

lives

* Epiſ. 12.

lives might be in danger ſhould, by ſuch Church officers as were authorized, be re-admitted into the Church." And he intreats his clergy to cheriſh the reſt of the fallen Chriſtians with care and tenderneſs.—He obſerves that the grace of the Lord would not forſake the humble.

His exhortations to his clergy were not without effect. They fell in with his views, and ſolicited the people to patience, modeſty, and real repentance.—They conſulted him how they ſhould act in certain critical caſes: He referred them to his former letters; and repeated his ideas of the proper ſeaſon of ſettling, in general, the concerns of the lapſed; at the ſame time he urged the indecency of ſome perſons in expecting a re-admiſſion into the Church before the return of thoſe, who were in exile and were ſtripped of all their goods for the ſake of the Goſpel. "But, if they are in ſuch exceſſive hurry," ſaid the biſhop, "it is in their own power to obtain even more than they deſire. The battle is not yet over; the conflict is daily carrying on. If they cordially repent, and the fire of divine faith burns in their breaſts, he who cannot brook a delay, may, if he pleaſe, be crowned with martyrdom."

The African prelate was ever ſtudious of preſerving an intimate connexion with the Roman Church, where ſtill the perſecution raged and prevented the election of a ſucceſſor to Fabian.

The next epiſtle is employed in giving them an account of his proceedings.

The bold neglect of diſcipline in Carthage proved a ſource of vexation to his mind in addition to his other trials, and called forth all the patience, tenderneſs, and fortitude of which he was poſſeſſed —Lucian, a confeſſor of Chriſt, ſincere and fervent in faith, but injudicious, and too little acquainted with Chriſ-

tian

tian precepts, undertook, in the name of the collective body of the confeſſors, to re-admit into communion all the lapſed who had applied to them *; and he wrote a very conciſe letter to Cyprian, in which he deſires him to inform the reſt of the biſhops of what they had done, and expreſſes a wiſh that he may acquieſce in the views of the martyrs.—It cannot be denied,—that, on the one hand, a ſuperſtitious veneration for the character of a martyr and a confeſſor had grown up among theſe Africans;—and that, on the other,—thoſe, who had ſuffered for Chriſt † in perſecution, were apt to be elated with ſpiritual pride, and to aſſume an authority which by no means belonged to them;—ſo dangerous a thing is it to be unacquainted with Satan's devices;—and ſo prone in all ages are even profeſſors of true religion to walk in the ſteps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ‡.

Cyprian ſent the copy of this letter to his clergy at Carthage; and prefaced his obſervations on it, in the following pointed manner; "TO THIS MAN WILL I LOOK," ſaith the Lord, "EVEN TO HIM THAT IS POOR AND OF A CONTRITE SPIRIT, AND THAT TREMBLETH AT MY WORD. This character becomes us all, particularly thoſe who have fallen, that they may appear before the Lord humble and penitent indeed." He, then, added,—"that the biſhops, his brethren, had agreed with him in opinion to defer the conſideration of the caſes of the lapſed to a council to be held by them in general, after that it ſhould have pleaſed God to reſtore peace to his Church;"—and he urged them "to ſupport theſe views." He ſent them, at the ſame time, a copy of a correſpondence between Caldonius, an African biſhop, and himſelf.

It

* Epiſ. 17. † Epiſ. 18. ‡ See Numbers xvi.

It is not known in what place Caldonius lived, but he, like Cyprian, was very cautious in reſtoring the lapſed to communion. Some, however, of his Church having apoſtatized by ſacrificing to the pagan gods, were called to a ſecond trial; when they recovered their ground; and, in conſequence, were driven into baniſhment and ſtripped of their property. Caldonius expreſſed his opinion that SUCH ſhould be re-admitted. Felix, a preſbyter, his wife Victoria, and one Lucius, thus loſt their poſſeſſions, which were forfeited to the Imperial treaſury. A woman alſo named Bona, who was dragged by her pagan huſband to ſacrifice, was, while they held her hands, compelled to a ſeeming compliance, but ſhe fully cleared her integrity by ſaying, "I did it not,—YE have done it." She alſo was baniſhed. Caldonius having ſtated the facts and given his own opinion, aſks the advice of Cyprian, who acquieſces in his judgment; and adds, that he wiſhed all the lapſed, who then cauſed him ſo much affliction, were diſpoſed to retrieve their Chriſtian character by theſe methods, rather than to increaſe their faults by pride and inſolence *.

A confeſſor, named Celerinus, who lived in ſome part of Africa,—moſt probably in baniſhment,—was much grieved on account of the apoſtacy of his two ſiſters, Numeria and Candida. He wept night and day in ſackcloth and aſhes on their account; and, hearing of Lucian ſtill being in priſon and reſerved for martyrdom at Carthage, he wrote to him to intreat that either he himſelf or any of his ſuffering brethren,—particularly, whoſoever ſhould firſt be called to martyrdom,—would reſtore them to the Church. He begs the ſame favour for Etcuſa alſo; who, though ſhe had not ſacrificed,

* Epiſ. 18, 19.

ficed, had given money to be excuſed from the act*. He aſſures Lucian of the ſincerity of their repentance; and ſays, it was evidenced by their kindneſs and aſſiduity in attending on the ſuffering brethren. He, manifeſtly, attributes too much to the character of martyrs, in affirming, that "becauſe they were friends and witneſſes of Chriſt, they had therefore a power of indulging all requeſts of this ſort." This letter and the anſwer of Lucian contain a mixture of good and evil: they exhibit true grace tarniſhed with pitiable ignorance, and ſuperſtition. Both Celerinus and Lucian were, doubtleſs, good men;—but WE are more diſpoſed to make candid allowances for the defects of our own age than for thoſe of preceding times.

The conduct of Lucian affords a memorable and lamentable inſtance of the weakneſs of human nature even in a regenerate ſpirit. His anſwer to Celerinus† diſplays the moſt conſummate fortitude,—and this,—as far as appears—grounded, in the main, on the true faith and love of Chriſt. The exiſtence of a deplorable and ſubtile ſpirit of pride, in ſome degree, is, perhaps, not to be denied; but this holy man was, certainly, not aware of the alloy.—He deſcribes himſelf and his companions as ſhut up in two cells, and exceſſively ſqueezed, and oppreſſed with hunger, thirſt, and intolerable heat. He mentions a number of them as already killed in priſon; and adds that, in a few days, he himſelf muſt expire. "For five days," ſays he, "we have received very little bread; and the water is apportioned to us by meaſure."—Such were the ſufferings of this perſecution.—Lucian ſpeaks of all this in a cool, and moſt unaffected manner;—like one, whoſe mind was

* Epiſ. 20. † Epiſ. 21.

was lifted up above the world and its utmoſt malice, and patiently expected a bleſſed immortality. As to the petition of Celerinus in favour of his ſiſters, he informs him that Paul the martyr who had lately ſuffered, had viſited him WHILE YET IN THE BODY, and had ſaid,—"Lucian, I ſay to thee before Chriſt, that if any perſon after my deceaſe beg of you to be reſtored to the Church, do you, in my name, grant his requeſt." Lucian extends this generoſity to the greateſt height; and refers him to the general letter, which he had already written in behalf of the lapſed. Yet, he owns they ought to explain their cauſe before the biſhop, and make a confeſſion. It is very plain, however, that he attributes, in this matter, a ſort of ſuperior dignity to Paul, to himſelf, and to the other martyrs: and, no doubt, the vain-glory of martyrdom was much augmented by the exceſſive regard which now began to be paid to to ſufferers.—Theſe and ſimilar facts conſtrain the reluctant hiſtorian to acknowledge, that the corruptions of ſuperſtition, in regard to the immoderate honours paid to ſaints and martyrs, which afterwards, through Satan's artifice and deluſion, grew to the enormous pitch of idolatry itſelf, had ALREADY entered the Church, and contaminated the ſimplicity and the purity of Chriſtian faith and dependence. Yet this conceſſion,—it muſt be remembered,—implies no ſuſpicion of hypocriſy either in the martyrs or in their admirers. This ſame Lucian was a man of true, of ſubſtantial piety.—He wept and lamented exceedingly on account of the lapſed women; and had the fear of God conſtantly before his eyes. Probably, he was not very judicious: his letter is confuſed and perplexed beyond meaſure; nor is it now eaſy to ſay, how far the obſcurity is to be

aſcribed to the want of a clear underſtanding, or to his very diſtreſſed circumſtances, or to the corruption of the text.

It is evident that a ſpirit extremely dangerous to the cauſe of piety, humility, and wholeſome diſcipline, was ſpreading faſt in the African Church. Celerinus himſelf, who had been a confeſſor*, owns that the cauſe of his ſiſter had been heard by the clergy of her Church,—at that time it ſeems, deſtitute of a biſhop;—who had deferred the ſettlement of it till the appointment of the chief paſtor;—but the precipitation of men would brook no delay.

The eyes of all prudent and more diſcerning perſons in the Church were fixed on the biſhop of Carthage in this emergency. The danger of the loſs of the Goſpel itſelf, by ſubſtituting a dependence on ſaints inſtead of Chriſt Jeſus, forcibly ſtruck his mind, His connexion with the Roman clergy, and the ſuperior regard to diſcipline which there prevailed, was of ſome ſervice on the occaſion; and, in his correſpondence with them†, he compares the immoderate aſſuming conduct of Lucian with the modeſty of the martyrs Mappalicus and Saturninus; who had abſtained from ſuch practices: The former had written only in behalf of his own mother and ſiſter; and the latter, who had been tortured and impriſoned, had yet ſent out no letters whatever of this kind. Lucian, he complains, every where furniſhed the lapſed with letters teſtimonial for their reception into the Church,

* By a confeſſor in the language of thoſe times, we are always to underſtand a perſon, who has publicly profeſſed or confeſſed himſelf to be a Chriſtian, when called upon by the heathens to ſacrifice to their gods, or otherwiſe to worſhip them.

† Epiſ. 22.

Church, written with his own hand in the name of Paul while alive, continued to furniſh them after his death, and declared that that martyr had directed him to do ſo;—though he ſhould have known, ſays Cyprian, that he ought to obey the Lord rather than his fellow-ſervant.

A young perſon, named Aurelius, who had ſuffered torments, was ſeized with the ſame vanity, but was unable to write; and Lucian wrote many papers in his name.

Cyprian complains of the odium thus incurred by the biſhops. In ſome cities he takes notice how the multitude had forced the biſhops to re-admit the lapſed; but he blames thoſe rulers of the Church for want of faith and Chriſtian conſtancy. In his own dioceſe he had occaſion for all his fortitude. Some, who were formerly turbulent, were now much more ſo, and inſiſted on their ſpeedy re-admiſſion. He obſerves that baptiſm is performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; and that remiſſion of paſt ſins is then received; and then he complains that the name of Paul, in effect, is inſerted in the place of the Trinity. He applies, on this occaſion, St. Paul's well-known holy execration denounced in the beginning of the Epiſtles to the Galatians. He owns his obligation to Rome for the letters of their clergy, which were well calculated to withſtand theſe abuſes.

He * wrote a congratulatory letter to the confeſſors Moyſes and Maximus, whoſe faith and zeal, united with modeſty and with the ſtricteſt attention to diſcipline he had formerly much commended; and he now thanks them for the epiſtolary advice, which they had given to the African confeſſors. In their anſwer † they appear tranſported with holy joy; and elevated

* Epiſ. 24. † Epiſ. 25.

elevated with the heavenly proſpects before them. They quote the New Teſtament Scriptures relative* to theſe things; and expreſs ſuch ſtrength of faith, hope, and charity, as demonſtrates the real power of divine grace to have been poſſeſſed by them in a very eminent manner. Their love of the divine word and of juſt diſcipline appear no leſs great than their zeal and ardour for martyrdom. They obſerve how deeply and how widely ſpread the evil of defection had been; and they conclude with very juſt obſervations on the right method of treating the lapſed, in perfect agreement with Cyprian. Greatneſs of mind, a high ſenſe of the importance of order, a heavenly warmth of temper, and an accuracy of judgment are equally and abundantly evident in this epiſtle:—Such endowments exiſting in juſt proportion prove that the work of the Holy Spirit was very ſound in theſe excellent men.

Cyprian now wrote to the lapſed themſelves; and rebuked the precipitation of ſome, and expoſed the injuſtice of their claims, ſince they acted as if they took to themſelves the whole title of the Church: he commended the modeſty of others, who refuſed to take advantage of the indiſcreet recommendation of the martyrs, and who wrote to him in the language of penitents;—whence it appears that the folly of the lapſed was by no means univerſal†.

Gaius Diddenſis, one of the preſbyters of Cyprian, undertook, along with his deacon, againſt the ſenſe of the reſt of the clergy, to communicate with the lapſed. Repeated admonitions availed not to a reformation. As the biſhop was ſenſible that the common people, for whoſe ſalvation he was

* Mat. v. 10, 11. Luke vi. 23. Mat. x. 18. Rom. viii. 35.
† Epiſ. 26.

was ſolicitous, were deceived by theſe things, he commends his clergy for refuſing communion with ſo obſtinate and irregular a preſbyter and deacon. —He again* intimates his intention of judging all things in full council upon his return; and intreats them to co-operate, in the mean time, with his views in the maintainance of diſcipline. In writing again to the Roman clergy he declares his determination of acting as God had directed his miniſters in the Goſpel, if the contumacious were not reformed by his and by their admonitions†.

The Roman clergy, condole affectionately with Cyprian;—"Our ſorrow," ſay they, "is doubled, becauſe you have no reſt from theſe preſſing difficulties of the perſecution; and becauſe the immoderate petulance of the lapſed has proceeded to the height of arrogance. But, though theſe things have grievouſly afflicted our ſpirits; yet your firmneſs and evangelical ſtrictneſs of diſcipline have moderated the load of vexation: You have both reſtrained the wickedneſs of certain perſons; and alſo, by exhorting them to repentance, have ſhewn them the wholeſome way to ſalvation.—We are aſtoniſhed that they ſhould proceed to ſuch lengths, in a time ſo mournful, ſo unſeaſonable as the preſent; —that they ſhould not ſo much as ASK for re-communion with the Church; but claim it as a right;—and even affirm that they are already forgiven in heaven." They then confute ſuch abſurd claims with pertinent arguments:—and proceed, in the ſpirit of charity, to ſay,—"Never ceaſe, brother, —in your love of ſouls,—to moderate and reſtrain theſe violent ſpirits; and to offer the medicine of truth to the erroneous, though the inclination of the ſick be often oppoſite to the prudent induſtry of the

* Epiſ. 27. † Epiſ. 28.

the phyſician. Theſe wounds of the lapſed are freſh and produce conſiderable tumours; but we feel aſſured, that, in proceſs of time, their heat and violence will ſubſide;—and the patients themſelves will then be thankful for that delay, which was abſolutely neceſſary for a wholeſome cure, provided there be none to arm them with weapons againſt themſelves, and, by perverſe inſtructions, to demand for them the deadly poiſon of an overhaſty reſtoration: for we cannot think that they would all * have dared to have claimed their admiſſion ſo petulantly without the encouragement of ſome perſons of eccleſiaſtical influence. We know the faith, the inſtitution, the humility of the Carthaginian Church;—whence we have been ſurpriſed in noticing certain harſh reflections made againſt you in a certain epiſtle, when we have formerly had repeated proof of your mutual charity."

They proceed to give the moſt wholeſome advice to the lapſed; and, in truth the whole conduct of the Roman clergy, at this ſeaſon, reflects the higheſt honour on their wiſdom and their affection; and affords the moſt pleaſing proofs of the good ſtate of that Church at that time. The ſame can by no means be ſaid of Cyprian's: They were,—as we have ſeen—, a declining people before his appointment to the See; and the ſcourge of perſecution produced vaſt numbers of apoſtates.—In thoſe days of diſcipline the lapſed, by their eagerneſs for re-admiſſion, ſhewed the ſame diſpoſitions of ſelfiſhneſs and of pride, which, in our times, are evinced by wiſhing to hear nothing but comfort preached to them,—by finding fault with miniſters who dare not ſpeak falſe peace;—and by unſoundly healing themſelves.—We are perfectly lax in point of diſcipline:

* They muſt have underſtood that by much the major part at leaſt of the lapſed were guilty of this evil.

diſcipline:—Who regards its menaces againſt the diſorderly?—With the firſt Chriſtians this was an awful concern.—The ſame depravity of nature ſeems now to work on corrupt minds in another way; but ſo as ſtill to exerciſe the patience and fortitude of godly miniſters; who, by perſevering in their duty and not giving way to the unreaſonable humours of their people in things of importance, will find, in the end, a wholeſome iſſue even with many of their moſt unpromiſing and froward hearers.

An African, named Privatus, who had left his country and travelled to Rome, ſolicited to be there received as a Chriſtian. Cyprian had mentioned him to the Roman clergy, and pointed out his real and dangerous character. In the cloſe of this admirable *letter they inform him that, before they had received his cautionary letters, they had detected the impoſtor. At the ſame time they lay down a golden maxim, "that we all ought to watch for the body of the whole Church, diffuſed through various provinces."—It was this unity and uniformity of the Chriſtian Church which, hitherto, had preſerved it, under God, from the infection of hereſies. None of theſe were yet able to mix themſelves with the "body of Chriſt†:" and the Church,—inſtead of being broken into ſmall handfuls of diſtinct ſets of perſons, all glorying in having ſomething peculiarly excellent, and prone to deſpiſe their neighbours,—as yet knew no other name than that of CHRISTIAN: numbers and diverſity of place alone prevented their aſſembling all together; for they were one people. In Italy and Africa the union at this time appears very ſalubrious: and the vigorous ſpirit and

* Epiſ. 29.

† Coloſ. i. 24. His body's ſake, which is the Church.

and ſound underſtanding of Cyprian was enabled to apply the ſolid graces of the Roman Church as a medicine for the reformation of his own diſordered flock.

The Roman clergy, in a *ſecond letter, take notice of St. Paul's elogium of their Church in the beginning of his epiſtle;—"that their faith was ſpoken of through the whole world," and they expreſs their deſire of treading in the ſteps of their Chriſtian predeceſſors. They mention the caſes of *Libellatici, which were two-fold; 1ſt Of thoſe who delivered in written teſtimonials to heathen magiſtrates, in which they abjured the Goſpel; and who, at the ſame time, by paying money, obtained the privilege of not ſacrificing to the gods.—2dly, Of thoſe who procured friends to do theſe ſame things for them. Both kinds,—theſe laſt, as well as thoſe, who had actually ſacrificed, were cenſured by the Roman clergy as lapſed perſons. They mention likewiſe the letters ſent by the Roman confeſſors into Africa to the ſame purport, and expreſs their joy on account of the conſiſtency of their conduct in matters of diſcipline with their ſufferings for the faith. They declare their agreement, in opinion with Cyprian,—to defer the ſettlement of theſe affairs till ſome general meaſure could be planned for this purpoſe, after peace ſhould be reſtored. "Behold," ſay they, "almoſt the whole world is laid waſte:—Fragments of the fallen lie in every place:—With one and the ſame counſel, with unanimous prayers and tears, let us,—who ſeem hitherto

* Epiſ. 30.

† So called from libellus,—which here means a conciſe written document, ſigned by the perſon whom it concerned, and containing an account of his religion: In many caſes, it was only ſigned by ſome creditable and well known friend.—An evaſive contrivance—for the purpoſe of quieting inſincere conſciences, not yet quite hardened!

hitherto to have eſcaped the ruins of this viſitation, as well as thoſe, who have not ſtood entirely faithful during the perſecution, intreat the Divine Majeſty, and beg peace in the name of the whole Church: let us cheriſh, guard, and arm one another with mutual prayers: let us ſupplicate for the lapſed, that they may be raiſed: let us pray for thoſe who do ſtand, that they may not be tempted to their ruin; let us pray alſo, that thoſe, who have fallen, may become ſenſible of the greatneſs of the crime, and may have the wiſdom not to wiſh for a crude and momentary medicine, and that they may not diſturb the yet fluctuating ſtate of the Church,—leſt they ſhould appear to aggravate our diſtreſſes by exciting INTERNALLY ſeditious and inflammatory commotions.—Let them knock at the doors, but not break them.—Let them go to the threſhold of the Church, but not leap over it. Let them watch at the gates of the heavenly camp, but with that modeſty which becomes thoſe who remember they have been deſerters. Let them arm themſelves indeed with the weapons of humility, and reſume that ſhield of faith which they dropped through the fear of death; but ſo that they may be armed againſt the devil,—not againſt that very Church, which laments over their fall."

The want of a biſhop at Rome was an additional reaſon for delay. They ſpeak of certain biſhops who lived in their neighbourhood, and alſo of others, who, through the flame of perſecution, had fled to them from diſtant provinces,—who all concurred in the ſame views.

There was a very young man, named Aurelius, whom Cyprian ſpeaks of as greatly excelling in the graces of Chriſtianity. He had twice undergone the rage of perſecution for the ſake of Chriſt:

Baniſhment

Baniſhment was his firſt puniſhment, and torture the ſecond. The biſhop had ordained this youth a reader in the Church of Carthage; and he apologiſes on account of the peculiar circumſtances of the caſe and of the times, for his not having previouſly conſulted his preſbyters and deacons. He beſeeches them to pray, that both their biſhop and good Aurelius may be reſtored to the exerciſe of their reſpective functions.—I cannot but hence obſerve, how exact and orderly the ideas of ordination were in thoſe times.—It is not to the advantage of godlineſs among us, that perſons can now be introduced to very high offices in the miniſtry without much previous trial, ceremony or difficulty*.

Celerinus was alſo ordained a reader by the ſame† authority. However weak in judgement he may appear from the tranſactions between him and Lucian already ſtated, the man ſuffered with great zeal for the ſake of Chriſt. The very beginning of the perſecution found him a ready combatant. For nineteen days he had remained in priſon fettered and ſtarved; but he perſevered and eſcaped at length without martyrdom. His grandfather and two of his uncles had ſuffered for Chriſt, and their anniverſaries were celebrated by the Church.

It ſeems, that Cyprian thought proper to reward with honourable eſtabliſhments in the Church thoſe who had ſuffered with the greateſt faithfulneſs in the perſecution, which was now drawing to a cloſe. Numidicus was advanced to the office of preſbyter. He had attended‡ a great number of martyrs who were murdered, partly with ſtones, and partly by fire. His wife, ſticking cloſe by his ſide, was burnt to death with the reſt: He himſelf, half

* Epiſ. 33. † Epiſ. 34. ‡ Epiſ. 35.

half burnt, buried with ſtones and left for dead, was found afterwards by his daughter; and, through her care, he recovered. Probably, this laſt caſe was the effect of the tumultuary rage of a perſecuting populace: The ferocity of many in thoſe times did not permit them to wait for legal orders.—Who can tell the number of Chriſtian ſufferers, which this mode of oppreſſion muſt have added to the liſt of martyrs?

Amidſt all theſe cares the charity and diligence of Cyprian toward his flock was unremitted. The reader who loves the annals of genuine and active godlineſs will not be wearied in ſeeing ſtill freſh proofs of it in extracts of two letters to his clergy*.

"Dear brethren, I ſalute you: By the grace of God, I am ſtill ſafe; and I wiſh to come ſoon to you;—that our mutual deſire, and that of all the brethren may be gratified. Whenever, on the ſettlement of your affairs, you ſhall write to me that I ought to come, or, if the Lord ſhould condeſcend to make it plain to me before, then I will come to you; for where can I have more happineſs and joy, than there, where God appointed me both firſt to become a believer, and alſo to grow in faith. I beſeech you, take diligent care of the widows, of the ſick, and of all the poor; and ſupply alſo ſtrangers, if any be indigent, with what is needful for them, out of my proper portion which I left with Rogatian the preſbyter. And leſt that ſhould, by this time, be all ſpent, I have ſent by Naricus the Acolyth†, another ſum of money to the ſame preſbyter, that you may the more readily and largely ſupply the diſtreſſed.

Though

* Epiſ. 36, 37.

† An inferior officer of the Church, ſignifying an attendant.

Though you have been frequently admoniſhed by my letters to ſhew all care for thoſe, who have glorioufly confeſſed the Lord and are in priſon, yet I muſt repeatedly intreat your attention to the ſame thing. I wiſh circumſtances would permit my preſence among you: With the greateſt pleaſure and readineſs would I diſcharge theſe ſolemn duties of love and affection towards our brethren. But—Do you repreſent me.—A decent care for the interment, not only of thoſe who died in torture, but alſo of ſuch as died under the preſſures of confinement, is neceſſary. For, whoever hath ſubmitted himſelf to torture and to death under the eye of God, hath already ſuffered all that God would have him to ſuffer.—Mark alſo the days in which they depart this life, that we may celebrate their commemoration among the memorials of the martyrs:—though our moſt faithful and devoted friend Tertullus,—who, agreeably to his uſual exactneſs and care, attends to their obſequies,—hath written, ſtill writes to me, and ſignifies the days in which the bleſſed martyrs are tranſmitted to immortality.—Their memorials are here celebrated, and I hope ſhortly, under divine providence, to be able to celebrate them with you. Let not your care and diligence be wanting for the poor, who have ſtood firm in the faith, and have fought with us in the Chriſtian warfare. Our affectionate care and attention to them are the more requiſite, becauſe neitheir poverty nor perſecution have driven them from the love of Chriſt."

Every one knows into what idolatry theſe commemorations of martyrs afterwards degenerated.—But I obſerve few or no ſigns of it in the days of Cyprian.

In addition to other evils the providence of God now thought fit to exerciſe the mind of Cyprian with

with one of the moſt diſtreſſing calamities, which can happen to a lover of peace and charity,—the riſe of a ſchiſm.

There* exiſted in the Church of Carthage a perſon of a very exceptionable character, named Feliciſſimus, who had long been a ſecret enemy of the biſhop. By the ſame artifices and blandiſhments, which ſeditious perſons make uſe of in all ages, this man had enticed ſome of the flock to himſelf; and he held communion with them on a certain mountain. Among theſe and in their neighbourhood, there arrived ſeveral diſcreet brethren, who were authorized by Cyprian to diſcharge the debts of poor Chriſtians; and to furniſh them with ſmall ſums of money to begin buſineſs again; and alſo to make a report of their ages, conditions, and qualities, that he might ſelect ſuch of them for eccleſiaſtical offices, as ſhould be judged properly qualified. Feliciſſimus oppoſed and thwarted both theſe deſigns. Several of the poor, who came firſt to be relieved, were threatened by him with imperious ſeverity, becauſe they refuſed to communicate on the mountain, This man growing more inſolent, and taking advantage of Cyprian's abſence,—whoſe return he ſpeedily expected becauſe the perſecution had nearly ceaſed at Carthage,—raiſed an oppoſition againſt the biſhop in FORM,—found means to unite a conſiderable party to himſelf,—and threatened all thoſe perſons, who did not chuſe to partake in the ſedition.—Among other crimes this ſower of diſcord had been guilty of adultery; and he now ſaw no method of preventing an infamous excommunication, but that of ſetting up himſelf as a leader.—His ſecond in this odious buſineſs was named Augendus; who did his utmoſt to promote the ſame views.—Cyprian, by letter, expreſſed his vehement ſorrow on account

* Epiſ. 38.

account of theſe evils, promiſed to take full cognizance of them on his return, and in the mean-time he wrote to his clergy to ſuſpend from communion Feliciſſimus and his abettors.—His clergy wrote to him in anſwer, that they had ſuſpended the chiefs of the faction accordingly *.

In the mean-time there were not wanting upright and zealous miniſters, who inſtructed the people at Carthage. Among theſe were diſtinguiſhed Britius the preſbyter, alſo Rogatian and Numidicus, confeſſors; and ſome deacons of real godlineſs. Theſe warned their flocks of the evils of ſchiſm, and endeavoured to preſerve peace and unity, and to recover the lapſed by wholeſome methods. In addition to their labours Cyprian wrote now to the people themſelves †. "For," ſays he, "the malice and perfidy of ſome preſbyters hath effected, that I ſhould not be able to come to you before Eaſter ‡. But the ſource of the faction of Feliciſſimus is now diſcovered, and we are acquainted with the foundation on which it ſtands. His followers encouraged certain confeſſors, that they ſhould not harmonize with their biſhop, nor obſerve eccleſiaſtical diſcipline faithfully and modeſtly. And as if it were too little for them to have corrupted the minds of confeſſors, and to have armed them againſt their paſtor, and to have ſtained the glory of their confeſſion, they turned themſelves to poiſon the ſpirits of the lapſed, to keep them from the great duty of conſtant prayer, and to invite them to an unſound and dangerous re-admiſſion. But I beſeech you, brethren, watch againſt the ſnares of the devil: Be on your guard and "work out your own ſalvation:" this is a ſecond and a different ſort of perſecution

* Epiſ. 39. † Epiſ. 40.

‡ In what way they hindered his arriving ſooner will appear afterwards.

cution and temptation. The five ſeditious preſbyters may be juſtly compared to the five pagan rulers, who lately, in conjunction with the magiſtrates, publiſhed ſome plauſible arguments with a view of ſubverting ſouls. The ſame method is now tried, for the ruin of your ſouls, by the five preſbyters with Feliciſſimus at their head: They teach you, —that you need not petition;—that he who hath denied Chriſt, may ceaſe to ſupplicate the ſame Chriſt whom he hath denied;—that repentance is not neceſſary;—and in ſhort, that every thing ſhould be conducted in a novel manner and contrary to the rules of the Goſpel.

My baniſhment of two years, and my mournful ſeparation from your preſence; my conſtant grief and perpetual lamentation; and my tears flowing day and night, becauſe the paſtor whom you choſe with ſo much love and zeal could not ſalute nor embrace you,—all this, it ſeems, was not a ſufficient accumulation of ſorrow.—To my diſtreſſed and exhauſted ſpirit a ſtill greater evil muſt be added,—that in ſo great a ſolicitude I cannot, with propriety, come over to you. The threats and ſnares of the perfidious oblige me to uſe caution; leſt, on my arrival, the tumult ſhould increaſe: and leſt I myſelf, the biſhop, who ought to provide in all things for peace and tranquillity, ſhould ſeem to have afforded matter for ſedition, and again to exaſperate the miſeries of the perſecution. Moſt dear brethren, I beſeech you do not give raſh credit to the pernicious repreſentations; of thoſe who put darkneſs for light: They ſpeak, but not from the word of the Lord: They promiſe to reſtore the lapſed, who are themſelves ſeparated from the Church.

There is one God, one Chriſt, one Church. Depart, I pray you, far from theſe men, and avoid

their diſcourſe, as a plague and peſtilence. They hinder your prayers and tears by affording you falſe conſolations. Acquieſce, I beſeech you, in my counſel: I pray daily for you, and deſire you to be reſtored to the Church by the grace of the Lord.—Join your prayers and tears with mine. But, if any perſon ſhall deſpiſe repentance, and betake himſelf to Feliciſſimus and to his faction, let him know that his re-admiſſion into the Church will be impracticable."

It is not poſſible, by a few extracts, to give a perfect idea of the glowing charity, which reigned in Cyprian's breaſt on this occaſion. Whoever has attended to the imbecility of human nature, ever prone to conſult eaſe, to humour ſelfiſh feelings, and to admit flattery, will ſee the difficult trials of patience, which faithful paſtors, in all ages, have endured from the inſidious arts of thoſe who would heal the wounds of people falſely.—Uncharitable—and, imperious—are the uſual epithets with which they are aſperſed on account of their faithfulneſs.—But "Wiſdom is juſtified of her children."

But there was alſo another character, who was a primary agent in theſe diſagreeable ſcenes,—Novatus, a preſbyter of Carthage, a man extremely ſcandalous and immoral*. His domeſtic crimes had been ſo notorious as to render him not only no longer fit to be a miniſter, but even unworthy to be received into lay-communion, The examination of his conduct was about to take place, when the breaking out of the perſecution by Decius prevented it. He it was, who ſupported and cheriſhed the views of Feliciſſimus and of the reſt; and he appears, by his addreſs and capacity, to have been extremely well qualified to

* Epiſ. 49.

to produce much miſchief in the Church. He could do it no ſervice; becauſe he was abſolutely devoid both of honeſty and conſcience.—Feliciſſimus himſelf, though at firſt the oſtenſible leader of the congregation on the mountain, gave way afterwards to one of the five preſbyters, named Fortunatus, who was conſtituted biſhop in oppoſition to Cyprian. Moſt of the five had been already branded with infamy for immoralities. Yet ſo deep is the corruption of human nature,—that ſuch characters uſually find advocates to eſpouſe them, even where the light of the Goſpel ſhines, and where there exiſt paſtors of eminent ſanctity. The fact is, paſtors of this laſt deſcription cauſe numerous enemies to themſelves by irritating the corruptions of wicked men, which they conſtantly do by refuſing to ſpeak peace where there is no peace.—It is no ſlight proof of the ſtrength of theſe evils, that even a perſecution the moſt dreadful yet recorded in the annals of the Church, did not perfectly unite Chriſtian profeſſors in love. The pious reader will, hence, infer the neceſſity, which called for ſo ſevere a ſcourge to the Church; and will alſo remark the advantages thence accruing to the really faithful, either by happily removing them to reſt out of a world of ſin and vanity, or by promoting their ſanctification, if their pilgrimage be prolonged.

Novatus, either unwilling to face the biſhop of Carthage, or deſirous to extend the miſchiefs of ſchiſm, paſſed the ſea and came to Rome. There he connected himſelf with a prieſt, named Novatian, a friend of the confeſſor Moyſes, who has been already mentioned, and whoſe ſufferings at Rome were of a tedious nature. Novatus had the addreſs and management to effect the ſeparation of Novatian from the Church.—Moyſes

renounced all intercourſe with his former friend and acquaintance on account of this conduct; and ſoon after died in priſon where he had been confined nearly a year. Doubtleſs, he entered into eternal glory at length, having left the evidence of modeſty and peaceableneſs in addition to his other more ſplendid virtues, as teſtimonies of his love to the Lord Jeſus.

Novatus found the religious ideas of his new aſſociate and partner arranged in extreme oppoſition to his own. Novatian had been a ſtoic before he was a Chriſtian; and he ſtill retained the rigour of the ſect to ſuch a degree, that he diſapproved of receiving thoſe into the Church who once had lapſed, though they gave the ſincereſt marks of repentance. Full of theſe unwarranted ſeverities, he exclaimed againſt the wiſe and well tempered lenity of the Roman clergy in receiving penitents. Many of the clergy of Rome, who were ſtill in priſon for the faith;—and among theſe Maximus and others, to whom Cyprian had formerly written,—were ſeduced by this apparent zeal for Church-diſcipline; and they joined Novatian. His African tutor, with aſtoniſhing inconſiſtency, after having ſtirred up a general indignation in his own country and againſt his own biſhop on account of ſeverity to the lapſed, now ſupported a party who complained of too much lenity at Rome. It is hard to ſay which of the two extremes is the worſe:—Novatus defended both within the compaſs of two years;—and with equal pertinacity.

The Roman clergy thought it high time to ſtem the torrent. They had, for ſixteen months*, with ſingular piety and fortitude governed the Church during one of its moſt ſtormy ſeaſons. Schiſm was now added to perſecution: The neceſſity

* Fleury, B. 6.

ſity of chooſing a biſhop grew more and more urgent; yet a biſhop of Rome muſt, of courſe, be in the moſt imminent danger of martyrdom; —for Decius threatened all biſhops with great haughtineſs and aſperity. Sixteen of them happened to be then at Rome, and theſe ordained Cornelius as the ſucceſſor of Fabian. He was very unwilling to accept the office; but the people, who were preſent, approved of his ordination; and no ſtep was to be neglected, which might be uſeful in withſtanding the growing ſchiſm.—The life of Cornelius appears to have been worthy of the Goſpel: Novatian, however, not only vented many calumnies againſt him, but alſo contrived, in a very irregular manner *, to be elected biſhop in oppoſition.

Thus was formed the firſt body of Chriſtians, who, in modern language, may be called DISSENTERS; that is, men, who ſeparate from the general Church, not on grounds of doctrine, but of diſcipline. The Novatianiſts held no opinions contrary to the faith of the Goſpel. It is certain from ſome writings of Novatian extant †, that their leader was ſound in the doctrine of the Trinity. But the confeſſors, whom his pretenſions to ſuperior ‡ purity had ſeduced, returned afterwards to the communion of Cornelius, and mourned over their own credulity. In a letter of Cornelius to Fabius, biſhop of Antioch, a few circumſtances are occaſionally mentioned from which an idea of the ſtate of the Church of Rome, at that time, may be collected §. There were under the biſhop forty-

* See in Euſeb. B. 6. Cornelius's letter concerning Novatian whom Euſebius confounds with Novatus by miſtake.

† See Waterland's Importance of the Trinity.

‡ Epiſ. 48 and 49.

§ About the middle of the third century.

forty-ſix prieſts, ſeven deacons, ſeven ſub-deacons, forty-two acolyths, fifty-two exorciſts, readers, and porters, and upwards of fifteen hundred widows, and infirm or diſabled perſons.—"The number of the laity was," ſays he, "innumerable."—I don't know ſo authentic a memorial of the numbers of the Chriſtians in thoſe times.

In his letter he charges Novatian,—perhaps without ſufficient warrant,—with having denied himſelf to be a prieſt during the heat of the perſecution, and with obliging his ſeparatiſts, when he adminiſtered to them the Lord's ſupper, to ſwear to adhere to himſelf.—The party, however, at Rome daily loſt ground: Nicoſtratus the deacon was among the very few perſons of note there who, after being ſeduced by the arts of Novatian, did not return into communion and peace with Cornelius.—Conſcious of ſcandalous crimes*, this ſchiſmatic fled from Rome into Africa;—whither Novatus himſelf alſo returned: and there the Novatians found many adherents, and are ſaid to have elected for themſelves, as a ſort of counter-biſhop, a preſbyter, named Maximus, who had been, lately, ſent as deputy from Rome by Novatian, to inform Cyprian of the new election† in oppoſition to that of Cornelius.—This ſame deputy Cyprian had rejected from communion.

It would not have been worth while to have detailed theſe events ſo diſtinctly, but for the purpoſe of marking the ſymptoms of declenſion in the Church,—the unity of which was now broken for the firſt time: for it ought not to be concluded that all the Novatians were men void of the faith and love of Jeſus. The artifices of Satan alſo, in puſhing forward oppoſite extremes, are worthy of notice:

* The Novatians called themſelves Cathari, pure people.

† The election of Novatian.

notice: The ſkilful tempter tries both the lax and the ſevere method of diſcipline. The former he finds more ſuitable to the ſtate of Chriſtianity in our times; but it could gain no ſolid footing in the third century. The Novatian ſchiſm ſtood at laſt on the ground of exceſſive ſeverity;—a certain proof of the ſtrictneſs of the eccleſiaſtical government then faſhionable among Chriſtians, and, of courſe, of great purity of life and doctrine having been prevalent among them: To refuſe the re-admiſſion of penitents was a dangerous inſtance of phariſaical pride: but, in juſtice to Novatian, it ought to be mentioned, that he adviſed the exhorting of the lapſed to repentance, though, he thought, that they ſhould then be left to the judgment of God. On the ſame plan he alſo condemned ſecond marriages:—Extreme auſterity and ſuperſtition were growing evils in this century; and they were cheriſhed by falſe philoſophy.

At length, Cyprian ventured out of his retreat and returned to Carthage. In what manner he there conducted himſelf ſhall be the ſubject of the next chapter.

CHAP. X.

CYPRIAN'S SETTLEMENT OF HIS CHURCH AFTER HIS RETURN, AND THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN CHURCH TILL THE PERSECUTION UNDER GALLUS.

THE prudence of Cyprian had been ſo remarkable during the whole of the perſecution of Decius, that we may fairly conclude he had ceaſed to apprehend any perſonal danger when he appeared again in public at Carthage. In fact, it was not the ceſſation of malice, but the diſtraction of public affairs, which put an end to this perſecution. Decius, on account of the incurſion of the Goths, was obliged to leave Rome; and God gave a reſpite to his ſervants, while men of the world were wholly taken up with reſiſting or mourning under their ſecular calamities.—After Eaſter a council was held at Carthage, and the eyes of Chriſtians were turned toward it: The Church was in a very confuſed ſtate; and ſome ſettlement of it was expected under the auſpices of Cyprian and the other biſhops of Africa. At firſt, a ſhort delay was occaſioned on account of doubts which aroſe reſpecting the validity of the election of Cornelius*. But an exact information of the circumſtances laid open the truth: the regularity of his appointment and the violation of order in the ſchiſmatical ordination of Novatian, by ſome perſons who were in a ſtate of intoxication appeared ſo

* See Cornelius's letter in Euſeb.

ſo clearly that no room for heſitation was left: Novatian was rejected in the African ſynod;—Feliciſſimus, with his five preſbyters, was condemned; and Cornelius was owned as legitimate biſhop of Rome.—And now the caſe of the lapſed, which had given ſo much diſquietude, and which Cyprian had ſo often promiſed to ſettle in full council, was finally determined:—and with men, who feared God, it was no hard thing to adjuſt a due medium.—A proper temperature was uſed between the precipitation of the lapſed and the ſtoical ſeverity of Novatian. Hence, tried penitents were reſtored, and the caſe of dubious characters was deferred; and yet every method of Chriſtian charity was uſed to bring about and facilitate their repentance and re-admiſſion.

Fortunatus preſerved ſtill a ſchiſmatical aſſembly. But both this biſhop and his flock ſhrunk ſoon into inſignificance. The Chriſtian authority of Cyprian was reſtored. The Novatian party alone remained a long time after, in Africa and elſewhere, numerous enough to continue a diſtinct body of profeſſing Chriſtians. The very little ſatisfactory light, which Chriſtian annals afford concerning theſe diſſenters, ſhall be given in its place. And, as I am convinced that the Almighty has not limited his creatures to any particular and ſtrictly defined modes of Church-government, I cannot be under much temptation to partiality.—The laws, indeed, of hiſtorical truth have obliged me to ſtate facts which prove their ſeceſſion to have been unjuſtifiable; but that circumſtance does not render it impoſſible that the Spirit of God might be with ſome of this people during their continuance as a diſtinct body of Chriſtians.

Thus did it pleaſe God to make uſe of the vigour and perſeverance of Cyprian in recovering the

the Church of Carthage from a ſtate of moſt deplorable declenſion. Firſt, ſhe had loſt her purity and piety to a very alarming degree; then, ſhe was torn with perſecution, and ſifted by the ſtorm ſo much that the greateſt part of her profeſſors apoſtatized; and, laſtly, ſhe was convulſed by ſchiſms, through men's unwillingneſs to ſubmit to the rules of God's own word in wholeſome diſcipline and ſincere repentance. On Cyprian's return, however, a new train of regulation was eſtabliſhed by the council of Carthage; and unity was reſtored in a great meaſure: The accounts of the ſucceeding tranſactions are imperfect; but there is great reaſon to believe that the Church of God was much recovered in theſe parts.

A. D. 251. Decius loſt his life in battle in the year two hundred and fifty-one, after having reigned thirty months.—A prince—neither deficient in abilities nor in moral virtues, but diſtinguiſhed, during this whole period, by the moſt cruel perſecution of the Church of God; he appears to have been bent on its ruin; but was ſtopped in his career by an over-ruling providence.

The Church were now allowed peace for a little time under Gallus, the ſucceſſor of Decius.

There remain a few circumſtances to be obſerved, which attended this perſecution in the Weſt, before we proceed to relate its effects in the Eaſtern Church.

Cyprian, zealous for the unity of the Church, informed Cornelius, *that certain perſons came to Carthage from Novatian, who inſiſted on being heard as to ſome charges which they had to produce againſt Cornelius:—But,—that as ſufficient and ample teſtimony had already been given in favour of Cornelius,—as a prudent delay had alſo been made,

* Epiſ. 41.

made,—and as the ſenſe of the Church of Rome had been authentically exhibited, any further audience of the NOVATIANS had been refuſed.—Theſe, he obſerves, ſtrove then to make a party in Africa; and for this purpoſe ſolicited different towns and private houſes. The council of Carthage informed them that they ought to deſiſt from their obſtinacy, and not to relinquiſh their mother Church; but to own, that a biſhop being once conſtituted and approved by the teſtimony and judgment of his colleagues and of the people, another could not be lawfully ſet up in his room: and, that therefore,—if they intended to act peaceably and faithfully,—if they pretended to be the aſſertors of the Goſpel of Chriſt, they ought to return to the Church.

Though the ideas contained in this epiſtle may appear very repugnant to the habits of thinking contracted by many profeſſors of godlineſs in our days, I ſee not, I own, on what principles they can be controverted. There is a medium between the deſpotiſm of idolatrous Rome and the extreme licentiouſneſs of modern eccleſiaſtical polity.—Are not peace and unity precious things?—and ought not they to be preſerved in the Church if poſſible?—Then why ſhould not the decided ſenſe of the majority prevail, where that mode of evangelically ſettling a Church has been uſual, and where it is not contrary to the eſtabliſhed laws of the country,—and laſtly, where paſtors ſound in faith and decorous in manners have been appointed?—Can it be right for a ſmall number of individuals to diſſent—and that, on no better ground, than their own fancy and humour *? This is not keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—Such, however,

* The author would, by no means, be underſtood here to encroach

however, was the firſt origin of the Novatian ſchiſm.

Perſons, who have been accuſtomed to approve the unreſtrained, and unſcriptural manner of conducting religious communities, which now ſo unhappily prevails, who feel no pity for the Church of Chriſt, nor care how much her members be torn one from another, and who make no more difficulty of changing their paſtors than their workmen, will not enter into the beauty of Cyprian's charitable concern for the unity of the Church. It is evident, union at Rome was as much on his heart as UNION at Carthage, becauſe he conſidered Chriſt's BODY as one. He explains * to Cornelius why he was not immediately acknowledged as biſhop, and how he was honourably received on full information. He ſpeaks of the Roman ſchiſm with horror; he repreſents the Chriſtian ſchiſmatics,

encroach on the right of private judgment; but he laments ſincerely that the evil of ſeparation ſhould have been conſidered by the Novatians as a trifling matter; and he, further, laments, that a ſpirit of the ſame kind ſhould appear to prevail ſtrongly in our own days—Does, then, right and wrong,—will any one ſay,—depend upon numbers?—Have not the FEW as undoubted a right to their own opinions as the MANY?—Such queſtions are often aſked,—and with an air of triumph.—But, after all,—whoever denied this right of opinion;—this right to think?—It is the right of ACTING according to this right of opinion that is conteſted.—Let a man, for example, in his private judgment prefer for his paſtor or his biſhop ſome perſon different from him who has been elected by the majority;—Let him publickly ſhew this preference at the time of giving his ſuffrage;—but let him remember to acquieſce peaceably in the appointment of the perſon elected; and not endeavour to divide the Church of Chriſt by placing a rejected candidate or ſome other favourite at the head of a faction in oppoſition to the election of,—perhaps,—a truly godly and religious man.

But in all this the author ſuppoſes either the Lex ſcripta or the Lex non ſcripta of the country to authorize eccleſiaſtical appointments by election.

* Epiſ. 42.

tics, as refuſing the boſom and the embrace of their mother, and as ſetting up an adulterous head OUT of the Church. I attempt not to vindicate expreſſions which go to the length of a total condemnation of the perſons of ſchiſmatics: Schiſm is not ſo deadly an evil as hereſy; nor muſt we undertake to judge the HEARTS of others. But when all this is allowed,—Does not the zeal of Cyprian call for ſimilar candour?—The miſchief, which had juſt begun to ſhew itſelf in Rome and Carthage, was then NEW in the Chriſtian world. Before the time of this able and active prelate no inſtance had happened of any ſeparations made from the Church, except in the caſe of damnable hereſies: Slight and tolerable inconveniences had not yet been thought ſufficient reaſons to juſtify ſuch violent meaſures;—and, it muſt be owned, if really good men in all ages had poſſeſſed the ſame conſcientious dread of the ſin of Schiſm, it would have fared much better with vital Chriſtianity; and, further, thoſe ſeparations which muſt of neceſſity be made, when falſe worſhip and falſe doctrine are prevalent, would have been treated with more reſpect in the world.

Encouraged with the ſucceſs of his pacific labours at home, Cyprian endeavoured to heal the breaches of the Roman Chriſtians. He was ſenſible that the example of the confeſſors, whom Novatian's appearance of ſuperior piety in diſcipline had ſeduced, had been attended with a great defection. He wrote reſpectfully to his former correſpondents, and aſſured them that the deepeſt ſadneſs had poſſeſſed his breaſt on their account: he reminds them of the honour of their faithful ſufferings: he intreats them to return to the Church; and points out the inconſiſtency of their glorious confeſſion of Chriſt with their preſent irregularity.

But

But ſo exactly attentive was Cyprian to order, that he firſt ſent the letter to Cornelius, and ordered it to be read to him, and ſubmitted to his conſideration before he would ſuffer it to be ſent to the confeſſors*. With the ſame cautious charity he explains again to Cornelius ſome things which had given umbrage to that prelate with reſpect to the delay of the acknowledgement of his ordination†. Theſe tranſactions appear to me to belong to my plan; and to be ſingularly inſtructive.—The conduct of this African biſhop is calculated to admoniſh Chriſtian miniſters in all ages to enlarge their views ſo as to comprehend the whole Church of Chriſt; and never to feel aſſured that they grow in true zeal and true charity as long as they do not fear the evils of diviſion, and do not labour to preſerve peace and unity.

The progreſs of Chriſtian grace will always be much ſeen in the juſt management of matters of this kind.

There is the greateſt reaſon to believe that the authority of Cyprian had a great effect on the minds of Maximus and the other ſeduced confeſſors, whoſe undoubted piety gave the chief ſupport to Novatian's party. But another circumſtance happened about the ſame time, which contributed to open their eyes effectually. The exceſſive eagerneſs of the ſchiſmatics at Rome defeated their own end. With the view of encreaſing the Schiſm, they were ſo fraudulent as to ſend out frequent letters in the names of theſe confeſſors, almoſt throughout all the Churches. Maximus and the reſt became acquainted with the fact and were exceedingly ſurpriſed: they owned they knew not a ſyllable of the contents of theſe letters: and they heartily deſired a re-union with the Church. The

* Epiſ. 43, 44. † Epiſ. 45.

The whole body of the Roman Chriſtians,—and probably, at that time no purer Church exiſted, —ſympathized with theſe confeſſors both in their ſeduction and in their recovery. Tears of joy and thankſgiving to God burſt forth in the aſſembly. "We confeſs," ſay Maximus and the reſt with ingenuous frankneſs, "our miſtake.—We own Cornelius the biſhop of the moſt holy general* Church, choſen by Almighty God and by Chriſt our Lord; we ſuffered an impoſture: We were circumvented by treachery and a captious plauſibility of ſpeech; for though we ſeem to have had ſome communication with a ſchiſmatic and a heretic†, yet our mind was ſincerely with the Church; for we knew that there is one God, one Chriſt, one Lord, whom we have confeſſed; one Holy Ghoſt, and that one biſhop ought to be in the general Church." "Should we not," ſays Cornelius, "be moved with their profeſſion;—and, by reſtoring them to the Church, give them the opportunity of acting according to that belief which they have dared to profeſs before all the world? We have reſtored Maximus the preſbyter to his office:—the reſt we have alſo received with the zealous conſent of the people."

Cyprian, with his uſual animation, ‡congratulated Cornelius on the event; and deſcribes the happy effect which the example of the confeſſors had on the minds of the people.—And, I cannot but think that, in modern times, much evil might have been prevented in the Church of Chriſt,—if many

* I chooſe to tranſlate Cornelius's Catholicæ in Epiſ. 46, which gives an account of this tranſaction, GENERAL rather than CATHOLIC, to diſtinguiſh the Church of Chriſt at large from particular ſeparatiſts.

† They confound here two terms that ought to be kept diſtinct. Novatian was a ſchiſmatic, but not a heretic.

‡ Epiſ. 47.

many excellent men, who have ſuffered their minds to be harraſſed by needleſs and frivolous ſcruples, had poſſeſſed more tenderneſs of conſcience in regard to the queſtion of Schiſm and ſeparation.—" No one can now be deceived," ſays Cyprian, " by the loquacity of a frantic ſchiſmatic, ſince it appears that good and glorious ſoldiers of Chriſt could not long be detained out of the Church by perfidy and fallacy."

The Novatians being baffled at Rome, Novatus and Nicoſtratus went over to Africa. We have already taken notice of their ſeditious attempts in thoſe parts. Cornelius *, by letter, warned Cyprian of the probable approach of the ſchiſmatics; and certainly, there is a diſagreeable harſhneſs of language in this account of his enemies as well as in the fragment of his epiſtle preſerved by Euſebius.

Of Novatus himſelf, the biſhop of Carthage, who muſt have thoroughly known him, aſſerts expreſsly and circumſtantially that he was guilty of horrible crimes, which, in truth, it is neither pleaſant to particularize, nor does the plan of this hiſtory call for ſuch a detail.—The honeſt charity of Cyprian requires that this teſtimony ſhould be admitted †. This biſhop was as remarkable for moderation as for zeal. He ſpeaks with much ſenſibility of perſons ſeduced by the arts of the foul impoſtor; and obſerves—" thoſe only will periſh who are wilful in their evils." The reſt, ſays he, the mercy of God the Father will unite with us, and the grace of our Lord Chriſt and our patience. I wiſh this benevolent ſpirit had had opportunities of knowing Novatian as perfectly as he knew Novatus. But a Roman, who does not appear ever to have come into Africa at all, could only be made known to him by report.—I ſhall find

* Epiſ. 48. † Epiſ. 49.

find a convenient place by and by, in which it may be proper to make ſuch further remarks upon him as the ſcanty and imperfect materials will ſupply.—Let the candid reader, however, always bear in mind, that, though Novatus was, doubtleſs, a very wicked man, though no ground for the ſeparation appears in hiſtory, and though there is not the leaſt reaſon to believe that the Spirit of God had left the general Church to abide with the diſſentients, yet the perſonal character of ſeveral of the ſupporters of the Schiſm might ſtill be excellent.

In anſwer to a friendly letter of the Roman confeſſors*, Cyprian, after congratulating them on their re-union with the Church, and expreſſing his ſincere ſorrow for the former defection, delivers his ſentiments on the duty of Chriſtians in this point. The flattering idea, which had ſeduced theſe good men, was a notion of conſtituting a Church here on earth exactly pure and perfect.—The man, who ſuſtained ſo much ill will on account of diſcipline, may be heard with patience on this ſubject.—Yet he was far from ſuppoſing that fallible mortals ſhould be able, in all caſes, to decide poſitively who were true Chriſtians and who not, and to rectify all abuſes, and to cleanſe the Church of all its tares. The middle ſtate between impracticable efforts of ſeverity and licentious neglect was Cyprian's judgment: He thought it neceſſary that the lapſed ſhould ſhew good marks of penitence; and he held it highly culpable to ſeparate from the viſible Church for the want of that exact purity in the members which the preſent ſtate of things does not admit. But let us hear the biſhop himſelf: The ſubject is not indeed, of the firſt importance, but it deſerves, on account of its practical,

* Epiſ. 50, 51.

practical influence, to be deeply conſidered by all friends of vital godlineſs.

"Though there appear to be tares in the Church, our faith and love ought not to be impeded by ſeeing them, ſo that we ſhould deſert our poſt.—Our buſineſs is to labour, that we ourſelves may ſtand a ſcrutiny, that when the corn ſhall be gathered into the harveſt, we may receive reward according to our labour. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of veſſels not only of gold and ſilver, but alſo of wood and of earth, and ſome to honour and ſome to diſhonour.

Be it our care that we be found veſſels of gold or ſilver: but we are not to break in pieces the veſſels of earth: this belongs to the Lord alone, who has a rod of iron.—The ſervant cannot be greater than his maſter: nor muſt any man claim to himſelf what the Father attributes to the Son alone: —No man ſhould think himſelf capable of thoroughly purging the floor, or of ſeparating all the wheat from the tares by human judgment. To think ſo is proud obſtinacy and ſacrilegious preſumption which a depraved madneſs aſſumes to itſelf; and while ſome lay claim to a dominion of this kind beyond the limits of juſtice and equity, they are loſt to the Church; and, while they inſolently extol themſelves, they become blinded by their paſſions ſo as to loſe the light of truth. With theſe views, we have aimed at a proper temperature; we have contemplated the balance of the Lord; we have thirſted exceedingly that we might be directed both by the holineſs and the mercy of God the Father; and, after a long and careful deliberation we have ſettled a juſt mediocrity.—I refer you to my own books on the ſubject, which I lately read here; and which, from motives

motives of brotherly love, I have ſent over to you to read. In them there is wanting neither a due cenſure of the lapſed, nor medicine to heal the penitent.—I have expeſſed alſo my thoughts on the unity of the Church to the beſt of my poor judgment*."

There was a biſhop of ſome note, named Antoninus, who ſeemed diſpoſed to embrace the Novatian ſchiſm. To him Cyprian in a long letter explains with much force and clearneſs the whole of his ideas on the ſubject. A ſhort abridgement of it may merit peruſal, becauſe of the charity and good ſenſe which run through it†.

He clears himſelf from the charge of inconſiſtency, by ſhewing, in both caſes, the views on which he acted under very different circumſtances, formerly with ſtrictneſs, now with lenity;—he informs him what had been determined both at Rome and Carthage concerning the lapſed;—he enlarges on the virtues of Cornelius, who had ventured his life in a time of ſevere trial under Decius;—he defends him againſt the unjuſt aſperſions of the Novatians, and demonſtrates, that very different rules and methods ſhould be uſed according to the circumſtances of offenders; and that Novatian's ſtoiciſm, by which all ſins are equal, was abſolutely repugnant to the genius of Chriſtianity. He ſupports his ideas of mercy by ſtriking and appoſite paſſages of Scripture. For inſtance: "The whole need not a phyſician, but the ſick." What ſort of a phyſician is he, who ſays, "I cure only the ſound?"—"Nor ought

* He means his treatiſes on the lapſed and on the unity of the Church.

† Epiſ. 52.

ought we to think all thoſe whom we ſee wounded by a degree of apoſtacy during the deadly perſecution to be abſolutely dead; but rather to lie half dead only, and to be capable of being recovered by ſound faith and penitence ſo as yet to diſplay in future the true characters of confeſſors and martyrs."

He ſhews that the cenſures of the Church ought not to anticipate the judgment of the Lord. His quotations of Scripture, in behalf of receiving penitents again into the Church, may well be ſpared:—The Novatian uncharitableneſs will, in our days, ſcarcely find a defender.

He beautifully inſiſts on the propriety and wholeſomeneſs of mercy, gentleneſs, and charity, and expoſes the unreaſonableneſs of the preſent diſſent from this circumſtance,—that formerly, in Africa, ſome biſhops excluded adulterers from a return into the Church,—but they did not form a ſchiſm on that account. And yet an adulterer appears to him to deſerve a greater degree of ſeverity than a man who lapſes through fear of torment.—He expoſes the abſurdity of the Novatians in exhorting men to repent, while they rob them of all thoſe comforts and hopes which ſhould encourage repentance. It is obſervable that he alleges nothing particular againſt the perſonal character of Novatian:—but he blames Schiſm with an exceſs of ſeverity not to be defended.

Remark, from another circumſtance, the ſtrictneſs of diſcipline which then prevailed in the pureſt Churches.—Several perſons, who ſtood firm for a time in perſecution and afterwards fell through extremity of torment, were kept three years in a ſtate of excluſion from the Church; and yet they lived all that time with every mark of true repentance.

repentance.—Cyprian being conſulted* decided that they ought to be re-admitted to communion.

The appearance of a new perſecution from Gallus now threatening the Church, Cyprian, with the African ſynod, wrote to Cornelius on the ſubject of haſtening the reception of penitents, that they might be armed for the approaching ſtorm†.

In the mean-time Feliciſſimus finding, after his condemnation, no ſecurity to his reputation in Africa, croſſed the ſea to Rome, raiſed a party againſt Cornelius, and, by menaces, threw him into great fear. Cyprian's ſpirit ſeems more diſturbed on this occaſion than I have ſeen reaſon to obſerve in any of his epiſtles. He ſupports the dignity of the epiſcopal character in a ſtile of great magnificence; but it is evident, that continued ill treatment from ſeditious characters had led him into ſome degree of impatience: The language he uſes concerning the authority of biſhops would ſound ſtrange to our ears, though it by no means contains any definite ideas contrary to the Scriptures. The whole epiſtle is calculated to rouſe the dejected ſpirit of Cornelius; and ſhews much of the hero,—leſs of the Chriſtian. He confeſſes—that he ſpeaks grieved and irritated by a ſeries of unmerited ill uſage. He takes notice that, at the very time of writing this, he was again demanded by the people to be expoſed to the lions. He ſpeaks of the ordination of Fortunatus and alſo of Maximus, by the ſchiſmatics, in a contemptuous manner.—It is very evident, that, on the whole, he triumphed in Carthage among his own people. His great virtues and unqueſtionable ſincerity ſecured him their affections; but they ſeem not to have been ſufficiently patient and diſcreet

* Epiſ. 53. † Epiſ. 54.

creet in the re-admiſſion of offenders. He complains that, in ſome caſes, they were violent and reſentful;—and in others, precipitately eaſy and favourable. The eloquence, and even the genuine charity of this great man, appears throughout this fifty-fifth epiſtle;—but it is deficient in the meekneſs and the moderation, which ſhine in his other performances.

CHAP. XI.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS IN THE EASTERN CHURCH.

THE eaſtern and weſtern Churches were, in thoſe times, divided from each other by the Greek and Roman language, though cemented by the common bond—of the Roman government, and much more—of the common Salvation. It will often be found convenient to conſider their hiſtory diſtinctly. The gentile Church of Jeruſalem ſtill maintained its reſpectability under Alexander its biſhop, who has been mentioned above. He was again called on to confeſs Chriſt before the tribunal of the preſident at Cæſarea; and, in this ſecond trial of his faith, having acquitted himſelf with his uſual fidelity, he was caſt into priſon: His venerable locks procured him neither pity nor reſpect; and he finally breathed out his ſoul under confinement*.

At Antioch, Babylas after his confeſſion dying in bonds, Fabius was choſen his ſucceſſor. In this perſecution the renowned Origen was called to ſuffer extremely. Bonds, torments, a dungeon, the preſſure of an iron chair, the diſtenſion of his feet for many days, the threats of burning, and other evils were inflicted by his enemies,—all which he manfully endured: and his life was ſtill preſerved; for the judge was ſolicitouſly careful that

* Euſeb. B. 6. from C. 39 to the end.

that his tortures ſhould not kill him. "What words he uttered on theſe occaſions and how uſeful to thoſe who need conſolation, many of his epiſtles," ſays Euſebius, "declare with no leſs truth than accuracy!"—If the words here alluded to were now extant, more light, I apprehend, might be thrown on the internal character of Origen, in reſpect to experimental godlineſs, than by all his works which remain. Theſe ſhew the ſcholar, the philoſopher, and the critic:—Thoſe would have diſplayed the Chriſtian. This great man died in his ſeventieth year, about the ſame time as the emperor Decius.

By and by I ſhall find occaſion to inſert an eſtimate of his character.

Dionyſius was at this time biſhop of Alexandria,—a perſon of great and deſerved renown in the Church. We are obliged to Euſebius for a few fragments of his writings, ſome of which being hiſtorical, muſt be here inſerted. In an epiſtle to Germanus he writes thus: "Sabinus, the Roman governor, ſent an officer to ſeek me, during the perſecution of Decius, and I remained four days at home, expecting his coming: he made the moſt accurate ſearch in the roads, the rivers, and the fields where he ſuſpected I might be hid. A confuſion ſeems to have ſeized him, that he could not find my houſe; for he had no idea that a man, in my circumſtances, ſhould ſtay at home. At length, after four days, God ordered me to remove*; and, having opened me a way contrary to all expectation, I and my ſervants and many of the brethren went together. The event ſhewed that the whole was the work of Divine Providence.—About ſun-ſet, I was ſeized, together with my whole company, by the ſoldiers, and was led to Tapoſiris,

* By a viſion or ſome other Divine manifeſtation, I ſuppoſe.

Tapoſiris. But my friend Timotheus, by the providence of God, was not preſent, nor was he ſeized. He came afterwards to my houſe, and found it forſaken and guarded; and he then learned that we were taken captive.—How wonderful was the diſpenſation! but it ſhall be related preciſely as it happened.—A countryman met Timotheus as he was flying in confuſion, and aſked the cauſe of his hurry: he told him the truth: the peaſant heard the ſtory and went away to a nuptial feaſt, at which it was the cuſtom to watch all night. He informed the gueſts of what he had heard. At once, they all roſe up, as by a ſignal, and ran quickly to us, and ſhouted: our ſoldiers, ſtruck with a panic, fled; and the invaders found us laid down on unfurniſhed beds. I firſt thought they muſt have been a company of robbers. They ordered me to riſe and go out quickly: at length, I underſtood their real deſigns; and I cried out, and intreated them earneſtly to depart, and to let us alone. But, if they really meant any kindneſs to us, I requeſted them to ſtrike off my head, and ſo to deliver me from my perſecutors. They compelled me to riſe by downright violence: and I then threw myſelf on the ground. They ſeized my hands and feet, pulled me out by force; and placed me on an aſs, and conducted me from the place."

In ſo remarkable a manner was this uſeful life preſerved to the Church. We ſhall ſee it was not in vain.

In an epiſtle to Fabius biſhop of Antioch, he gives the following account of the perſecution at Alexandria, which had preceded the Decian perſecution by a whole year, and which muſt have happened therefore under Philip, the moſt open friend of Chriſtians. "A certain augur and poet took

took pains to ſtir up the malice of the gentiles againſt us, and to inflame them with zeal for the ſupport of their own ſuperſtitions. Stimulated by him, they gave free courſe to their licentiouſneſs, and deemed the murder of Chriſtians to be the moſt perfect piety and the pureſt worſhip of demons. They firſt ſeized an old man, named Metras, and ordered him to blaſpheme: he refuſed; and they beat him with clubs, and pricked his face and eyes with ſharp reeds: they dragged him to the ſuburbs, and they there ſtoned him. Then they hurried one Quinta, a faithful woman, to the idol-temple, and inſiſted on her worſhipping of the gods.—To this ſhe ſhewed the ſtrongeſt marks of abomination: They then tied her by the feet; dragged her over the rough pavement through all the city; daſhed her againſt mill-ſtones, and whipped her; and, laſtly, they led her back to the place where they had firſt ſeized her; and there they diſpatched her.—After this, with one accord, they all ruſhed on the houſes of the godly: every one ran to the houſe of his neighbour, ſpoiled, and plundered it; and purloined the moſt valuable goods, and threw away thoſe things which were vile and refuſe, and burnt them in the roads; and thus was exhibited the appearance of a captive and ſpoiled city. The brethren fled and withdrew themſelves, and received with joy the ſpoiling of their goods, as thoſe did to whom Paul beareth witneſs; and I do not know, that any perſon, who fell into their hands,—except one,—denied the Lord. Among others, they ſeized an aged virgin, called Apollonia, and daſhed out all her teeth; and having kindled a fire before the city, they threatened to burn her alive, unleſs ſhe would conſent to blaſpheme. This admirable woman begged for a little intermiſſion; and ſhe then

then quickly leaped into the fire, and was conſumed. They laid violent hands on Serapion in his own houſe: they tortured him and broke all his limbs; and, laſtly, they threw him head-long from an upper room. No road, public or private, was paſſable to us, by night or by day: the people crying out always and every where, that unleſs we would ſpeak blaſphemy, we ſhould be thrown into the flames;—and theſe evils continued a long time. A ſedition then ſucceeded, and a civil war, which averted their fury from us, and turned it againſt one another; and, again, we breathed a little during the mitigation of their rage. Immediately the change of government was announced: The perſecuting Decius ſucceeded Philip our protector, and we were threatened with deſtruction: The edict, which our Lord foretold would be ſo dreadful as to ſeduce, if it were poſſible, even the elect *, appeared againſt us.—All were aſtoniſhed; many Chriſtians of quality diſcovered themſelves immediately through fear; others, who held public offices, were conſtrained by their office to appear; and others were brought forward and produced by their gentile relations. Each perſon was cited by name. They then approached the unholy altars; ſome pale and trembling, not as if they were going to ſacrifice, but to be themſelves the victims; ſo that they were derided by the multitude who ſtood around; and it was viſible to all that they were very much frightened both at the proſpect of death and at the crime of ſacrificing: but ſome ran more readily to the altar, and affirmed boldly, that they never had been Chriſtians. Of ſuch our Lord affirmed moſt truly, that they ſhould be ſaved with great difficulty.

* It is evident that this application of our Lord's words is a miſtake.

culty*. Of the reſt ſome followed the various examples abovementioned; and others fled:—Some perſiſted in the faith; and ſuffered bonds and impriſonment for many days; but, at laſt, before they were led to the tribunal, they abjured their religion;—others held out longer, and endured torments.—But the firm and ſtable pillars of the Lord, being ſtrengthened by him, and having received vigour and courage proportionate and correſpondent to the lively faith which was in them, became admirable martyrs of his kingdom.—The firſt of theſe was Julian, a gouty perſon who could neither ſtand nor walk; he was brought forth with two others who carried him; one of whom immediately denied Chriſt. The other, called Cronion the Benevolent, and old Julian himſelf, having confeſſed the Lord, were led through the whole city,—very large as ye know it is,—ſitting on camels: they were then ſcourged, and were at laſt burnt in a very hot fire in the view of ſurrounding multitudes. A ſoldier, named Beſas, ſtood by them and defended them from inſults; which ſo incenſed the mob; that the man loſt his head for having thus behaved boldly in the ſervice of his God.—An African by birth, called Macar†, and truly meriting the appellation, having reſiſted much importunity, was burnt alive. After theſe Epimachus and Alexander, who had long ſuſtained impriſonment and undergone a thouſand tortures, were burnt to death; and along with theſe four women. Ammonarion, a holy virgin, was grievouſly tormented by the judge for having declared beforehand that ſhe would not repeat the blaſphemy which he ordered: ſhe continued faithful, and was led away to

* I ſuppoſe he means becauſe they were rich.

† Happy or bleſſed.

to execution. The venerable ancient Mercuria, and Dionyſia, a mother, indeed, of many children, but a mother who did not love her children more than her Lord: and another Ammonarion,—theſe, together with many others, were ſlain by the ſword without being firſt expoſed to torments;—for the preſident was aſhamed of torturing them to no purpoſe, and of being baffled by women;—which had been remarkably the caſe in his attempt to overcome the former Ammonarion, who had undergone what might have been eſteemed ſufficient torture for them all.—Heron, Ater, and Iſidore, Egyptians, and with them a boy of fifteen, called Dioſcorus, were brought before the tribunal: the boy reſiſted both the blandiſhments and the tortures which were applied to him: the reſt, after cruel torments, were burnt. The boy having anſwered in the wiſeſt manner to all queſtions, and excited the admiration of the judge, was diſmiſſed by him from motives of compaſſion, with an intimation of hope that he might afterwards repent —And now the excellent Dioſcorus is with us, reſerved to a greater and longer conflict. Nemeſian was firſt accuſed as a partner of robbers; but he cleared himſelf before the Centurion of this charge:—An information—that he was a Chriſtian, was then brought againſt him, and he came bound before the preſident, who moſt unjuſtly ſcourged him with twice the ſeverity uſed in the caſe of malefactors, and then burnt him among robbers.—Thus was he honoured by reſembling Chriſt in ſuffering.

And now ſome of the military guard, Ammon, Zeno, Ptolemy, and Ingenuus, and with them old Theophilus, ſtood before the tribunal; when a certain perſon being interrogated whether he was a Chriſtian, and appearing diſpoſed to deny the imputation, they made ſuch lively ſigns of averſion as

to

to ſtrike the beholders; but before they could be ſeized, they ran voluntarily to the tribunal and owned themſelves Chriſtians,—ſo that the governor and his aſſeſſors were aſtoniſhed.—God triumphed glorioufly in theſe; and gave them evidently the aſcendant over the judges; and they went to execution with all the marks of exultation.

Many others through the towns and villages were torn to pieces by the gentiles. Iſcyrion was an agent to a certain magiſtrate; yet he refuſed to ſacrifice: This man, after repeated indignities, was killed by a large ſtake driven through his inteſtines.—But why need I mention the multitude of thoſe who wandered in deſerts and mountains, and were at laſt deſtroyed by famine, and thirſt, and cold, and diſeaſes, and robbers, and wild beaſts? Thoſe, who ſurvived, are witneſſes of their faithfulneſs and victory. Suffice it to relate one fact: There was a very aged perſon, named Chæremon, biſhop of the city of Nilus. He, together with his wife, fled into an Arabian mountain; and they did not return; nor could the brethren, after much ſearching, diſcover them alive or dead; and many perſons about the ſame Arabian mountain were led captive by the Barbarian Saracens, ſome of whom were afterwards redeemed for money with difficulty;—others could never regain their liberty." Dionyſius adds ſomething concerning the benevolence of the martyrs towards the lapſed, and contraſts it with the inexorable ſeverity of Novatian.

Two things are evident from this narrative, 1ſt, that the perſecution found the eaſtern Chriſtians as poorly provided againſt the ſtorm as the weſtern. Long peace and proſperity had corrupted both; and men, in the former part of this century, had forgotten that a Chriſtian life was that of

of a ſtranger. The Decian perſecution, under God, was at once a ſcourge and an antidote. 2d, Yet there ſtill exiſted a competent number of thoſe who ſhould prove the truth of Chriſtianity, and the power of Divine Grace accompanying it.—The true Church is not deſtroyed, but flouriſhes and triumphs amidſt inward and outward evils.

Euſebius relates a ſtory, from Dionyſius's letters to Fabius, which he ſays was full of wonder: "There was a faithful aged perſon, named Serapion, who had lived blameleſs a long time, but fell, in the time of trial, through fear of death or of bodily pain. He had frequently ſolicited to be reſtored to the Church, but in vain,—becauſe he had ſacrificed. He was ſeized with a diſtemper and continued ſpeechleſs and ſenſeleſs for three days ſucceſſively; but recovering a little on the fourth, he called to his grandſon, "And how long," ſays he, "do you detain me? I beſeech you haſten and quickly diſmiſs me. Deſire one of the preſbyters to viſit me;" and after this he was again ſpeechleſs. The boy ran for the preſbyter; it was night; the preſbyter was ſick and could not come. But he had given directions to receive dying penitents,—particularly if they ſhould have ſupplicated for it,—that they might leave the world in good hope. He gave a little of the Euchariſt to the boy; and bid him to dip it in water, and put it into the old man's mouth: The child haſtened to follow the directions; and found Serapion a little recruited,—who ſaid, "You are come, ſon;—do quickly what you are ordered, and diſmiſs me." The old man had no ſooner received the morſel, than he gave up the ghoſt.—Was he not evidently reſerved, until he was abſolved; and was not his ſin remitted, and the man acknowledged by Chriſt as a faithful

faithful ſervant on account of many good works." Thus far Dionyſius.

I remark here, 1ſt, That the connexion between the ſacrament and the grace conveyed by it, being uſually thus expreſſed as if it were neceſſary and indiſſoluble, both in baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, gave occaſion to the increaſe of much ſuperſtition in the Church. I am diſpoſed to believe, that both Dionyſius and Serapion knew that the ſign was nothing without the inward grace. Yet perhaps they are not to be acquitted of ſuperſtition on account of the inordinate ſtreſs which they laid on external things.—The reader muſt obſerve that this evil continues to grow during the third century.

2d,—That, along with this ſuperſtition, the power of the leaders of the Church would naturally increaſe beyond the due bounds. That it did ſo afterwards ſurprizingly is well known;—but I judge the evil to have begun already both in the eaſt and in the weſt.

3d,—That there was at that time, among perſons of real piety, a general propenſity to extend diſcipline too far. Serapion ought, doubtleſs, to have been ſooner received into the Church. The Lord ſeems to have favoured him with a token of his loving kindneſs, by fulfilling his deſires of being re-admitted into the Church before he left the world.—But how much more decent and proper would it have been for him to have been received while in health? Satan always puſhes men to extremes. Church-diſcipline was held then too high; with us it is reduced to the loweſt ſtate. Without communion with a viſible Church eſtabliſhment in form, however impracticable it might be, it was ſcarce thought poſſible for a man to be ſaved:

ſaved: Many perſons, at that time, would have had no hope of Serapion's ſalvation, if the power of his diſeaſe had prevented the reception of the Euchariſt. This miſerable ſuperſtition increaſed, till by the light of the reformation it was deſtroyed. On the contrary, in our age, the Lord's Supper itſelf is treated with levity by thouſands who call themſelves Chriſtians; and communion with a ſettled miniſtry and Church is eſteemed as a thing of trifling conſequence by numbers who profeſs the doctrines of vital godlineſs.

Dionyſius wrote ſeveral other tracts which are mentioned by Euſebius:—Among the reſt, he wrote to Cornelius, biſhop of Rome, in anſwer to his letter againſt Novatian*; and informed him—that he had been invited by Helenus of Tarſus in Cilicia, and by the reſt of the biſhops of his neighbourhood, by Firmilian of Cappadocia and Theoctiſtes of Paleſtine, to meet them in a ſynod at Antioch, where ſome attempts were made to ſtrengthen the Novatian party.—But all theſe Churches united to condemn the ſchiſm: and, with this view, Dionyſius wrote to the Roman confeſſors both before and after they had returned to the Church. On the whole, the Eaſt and Weſt united in condemning the new diſſenters; whoſe HEAD having profeſſed that ſome brethren had compelled him to the ſeparation, Dionyſius wrote to Novatian himſelf to this effect: "If you were led unwillingly; as you ſay, you will prove it by returning willingly; for a man ought to ſuffer any thing rather than to rend the Church of God. Even martyrdom on this account would be no leſs glorious than on any other;—even more ſo.—For in common martyrdom a man is a witneſs for one ſoul;—here for the whole Church. And now, if you

* Euſebius certainly calls him Novatus by miſtake.

you would compel or perſuade the brethren to unanimity, your good conduct would be more laudable than your defection was culpable. The latter will be forgotten, the former will be celebrated through the Chriſtian world. But if you find it impracticable to draw over others, ſave your own ſoul at leaſt; I wiſh you to be ſtrong in the Lord, and ſtudious of peace."—Such was the zeal of the Chriſtian leaders at that time for the preſervation of UNITY. If there had been a defection from Chriſtian purity of doctrine in the general Church, or if the Heads of it, for the moſt part, had been vicious men in principle or practice, one might have ſuſpected that the Lord had forſaken theſe, and that his ſpirit had reſted chiefly with the new ſeparatiſts. But that godlineſs in a conſiderable degree prevailed ſtill in the Church at large is very evident. Cyprian, Dionyſius, Cornelius, Firmilian, were holy men: Martyrs, in abundance from their flocks, ſuffered for Chriſt's ſake: A number of Church-officers ſuffered in a very edifying manner:—The lapſed were reſtored among them by the moſt Chriſtian methods of mildneſs and juſt diſcipline;—and this with ſucceſs in a variety of caſes.—Dionyſius concurred with Cyprian in his views on the ſubject: and, though the flame of Chriſtian piety was conſiderably lowered ſince the days of Ignatius, I ſee not a ſhadow of proof that there was any juſt reaſon for diſſent or any ſuperior degree of ſpirituality with the Novatians,—If, for example, there had been many perſons among them of half the piety of Cyprian, I think it probable, that hiſtory would not have been ſilent reſpecting them.

It is my duty to trace the work of the Divine Spirit wherever I can find it. Traces of this Spirit, with the Novatians in general, in theſe times, I cannot

cannot diſcern: and yet, it is improbable, that they ſhould have been a people altogether forſaken of God. Wherever the real truth, as it is in Jeſus, is profeſſed, there ſome meaſure of his Spirit moſt probably exiſts. Novatian himſelf is conſtantly reprehended both by Cyprian and by Dionyſius: Yet, I obſerve, they caſt no imputations on his moral character: His ſchiſm alone is the object of their reprehenſion: Cornelius, indeed, carries the matter ſtill farther, as we have ſeen; but I am not diſpoſed to credit all he ſays: His temper was heated by perſonal competition.

Before we proceed to other inſtances of the Decian perſecution, it may be proper to conclude the affair of Novatian: Let us collect what evidence we can; and endeavour to form a juſt eſtimate of his character:—If our obſervations appear unſatisfactory;—let it be imputed to the ſcantineſs of the materials.

Novatian was originally a ſtoic; and ſeems to have contracted all the ſeverity, which marked that ſect of philoſophers. He was born a Phrygian, and came to Rome, where he embraced Chriſtianity. He applied for the office of preſbyter; but, as he had neglected certain eccleſiaſtical forms after recovery from a ſickneſs, he was objected to by the clergy and the people. The biſhop,—probably, Fabian the predeceſſor of Cornelius,—deſired that the rules might be diſpenſed with in his caſe. This was granted; and it is a teſtimony, ſurely, rather in favour of his abilities and conduct than otherwiſe, particularly, as the circumſtance ſtands recorded by the pen of his rival Cornelius *. That he excelled in genius, learning, and eloquence, is certain: and hence, it is not probable, that he was a man of debauched

or

* See his letter in Euſebius.

or of looſe morals. The evils of his ſchiſm were unqueſtionably great; but no vice ſeems affixed to his character; nor does any juſt ſuſpicion lie againſt the purity of his intentions. One* of the letters of the Roman clergy to Cyprian, written by Novatian himſelf, is ſtill extant: It is worthy of a Roman preſbyter and of a zealous Chriſtian;—and, at that time, the writer coincided in opinion with the African prelate. Euſebius, in his Chronicon, ranks him among the confeſſors; and it is certain, that while he continued preſbyter his fame was not only without a blot, but very fair in the Church.

Perhaps it had been happy for him if he had never conſented to become a biſhop. The preference given to Cornelius in the election of a biſhop, was, probably enough, the grand cauſe of the ſchiſm: From being actuated by a temperate degree of ſeverity, he became intolerably inexorable in his ideas of diſcipline: It is not for man to ſay how far temper, ſtoiciſm, prejudice, and principle might all unite in this buſineſs:—We muſt now behold him biſhop of the Novatians, and induſtriouſly ſpreading the ſchiſm through the Chriſtian world. The repeated condemnation of it in ſynods hindered not its growth; and as purity of principle and inflexible ſeverity of diſcipline, were their favourite objects, it is not to be apprehended that Novatian could have ſupported himſelf in the opinion of his followers without ſome degree of exemplary conduct. He is allowed to have preſerved in ſoundneſs the Chriſtian FAITH: There is actually extant a treatiſe by him on the Trinity;—and that, one of the moſt regular and moſt accurate which is to be found among the antients. It is aſtoniſhing that any man ſhould aſcribe the ideas

* Pam. 31.

ideas of the trinitarians mainly to the Nicene Fathers. We have repeatedly ſeen proofs of the doctrine being held diſtinctly in all its parts from the Apoſtles' days. This treatiſe by Novatian may be added to the liſt.—I know not how to abridge it better than by referring the reader to the Athanaſian creed. The Trinity in Unity, and the Godhead and Manhood of Chriſt in one perſon, are not more plainly to be found in that creed, than in the compoſition of this contemporary of Cyprian.

I wiſh that a more experimental view,— a more practical uſe—of Chriſtian doctrines, were to be ſeen in it. But all profeſſors of Chriſtianity,—Churchmen or diſſenters—ſeem, at that time, to have much relaxed in this reſpect. The ſavour and ſimplicity of the life of faith in Jeſus was not ſo well known: yet,—particularly under the article of the Holy Ghoſt,—he ſpeaks very diſtinctly of "HIM as the author of regeneration, the pledge of the promiſed inheritance, and, as it were, the hand-writing of eternal ſalvation,—who makes us the temple of God and his houſe,—who intercedes for us with "groanings which cannot be uttered," —who acts as our advocate and defender,—who dwells in our bodies, and ſanctifies them for immortality. He it is, who fights againſt the fleſh: —hence the fleſh fights againſt the ſpirit:"—and he proceeds to ſpeak in the beſt manner of his holy and bleſſed operations in the minds of the faithful*.

He wrote alſo a ſenſible little tract againſt the bondage of Jewiſh meats; in which he explains the nature of Chriſtian liberty, according to the views of St. Paul, with juſt directions for the maintenance of temperance and decorum.

The

* Nov. Trin. p. 114.

The letter to Cyprian before mentioned closes his works. He lived to the time of Valerian, under whom Cyprian suffered. In that persecution also fell Novatian by martyrdom, as appears from the authentic testimony of Socrates *. His rival Cornelius died a little time before them, in exile for the faith.—It will be a grateful refreshment to the reader to pause for a moment; and to contemplate these three men meeting in a better world, clothed with the garments of Jesus, and in him knowing their mutual relation, which prejudice hindered in this mortal scene of strife, infirmity and imperfection. Neither the separation of Novatian, nor the severity with which the two regular bishops condemned him, can be justified. —There seems, however, sufficient evidence of the Christian character of the separatist:—The general tenor of his life;—and above all, his death, shew to whom he belonged †.

The reader will pardon this digression;—if that be indeed a digression,—which shews that the Spirit of God was not limited to one denomination of Christians; and which paves the way for a liberal and candid construction of characters. In the future scenes of this history, while we trace the kingdom of God through a multiplicity of names and divisions of men, it will highly behove us to cultivate an unprejudiced temper.

To proceed with the Decian persecution.—The management of this seems to have been the whole employment of the magistrates. Swords, wild beasts, pits, red-hot chairs, wheels for stretching human bodies, and talons of iron to tear them;—these were, at this time, the instruments of pagan vengeance. Malice and covetousness in informing against

* L. IV. C. 28.

† Greg. Nyss. vita Thaum. p. 1000.—See Fleury, B. 6—25.

againſt Chriſtians were eagerly and powerfully ſet on work during this whole ſhort, but horrible reign: And the genius of men was never known to have had more of employment in aiding the ſavageneſs of the heart. Life was prolonged in torture, in order that impatience in ſuffering might effect at length, what ſurprize and terror could not.

Mark two examples of Satanic artifice. A martyr having endured the rack and burning plates, the judge ordered him to be rubbed all over with honey, and then to be expoſed in the ſun, which was very hot, lying on his back with his hands tied behind him, that he might be ſtung by the flies.—Another perſon, young and in the flower of his age, was, by the order of the ſame judge, carried into a pleaſant garden among flowers, near a pleaſing rivulet ſurrounded with trees: here they laid him on a feather bed, bound him with ſilken cords, and left him alone. Afterward, a very handſome lewd woman was introduced to him; who began to embrace him and to court him with all imaginable impudence. The martyr ſpit in her face; and at length bit off his own tongue; as the moſt effectual method in his power of reſiſting the aſſaults of ſenſuality. In the moſt ſhocking and diſguſting trials, Chriſtianity, however, appeared what it is,—true holineſs; while its perſecutors ſhewed that they were at enmity with every virtuous principle of internal benevolence, and of external decorum*.

Alexander, biſhop of Comana, ſuffered martyrdom by fire. At Smyrna Eudemon the biſhop apoſtatized, and ſeveral unhappily followed his example. But the glory of this Church, once ſo celebrated by the voice of infallibility†, was not totally

* Jerom vita Paul. † Rev. ii. 8, 9, &c.

totally loſt. The example of Pionius, one of the preſbyters, was ſalutary to all the Churches.—The account of his martyrdom is, in ſubſtance, confirmed by Euſebius:—Nor, in general, is there any thing in it improbable, or unworthy of the Chriſtian ſpirit*.—In expectation of being ſeized, he put a chain about his own neck, and cauſed Sabina and Aſclepiades to do the ſame,—to ſhew their readineſs to ſuffer. Polemon, keeper of the idol-temple, came to them with magiſtrates: "Don't you know," ſays he, "that the emperor has ordered you to ſacrifice?" "We are not ignorant of the commandments," ſays Pionius, "but they are thoſe commandments which direct us to worſhip God." "Come to the market-place," ſays Polemon, "and ſee the truth of what I have ſaid." "We obey the true God," ſaid Sabina and Aſclepiades.

When the martyrs were in the midſt of the multitude in the market-place, "It would be wiſer in you," ſays Polemon, "to ſubmit and avoid the torture." Pionius began to ſpeak: "Citizens of Smyrna, who pleaſe yourſelves with the beauty of your walls and city, and value yourſelves on account of your Poet Homer; and ye Jews, if there be any among you, hear me ſpeak a few words: We find that Smyrna has been eſteemed the fineſt city in the world, and was reckoned the chief of thoſe which contended for the honour of Homer's birth. I am informed that you deride thoſe who come of their own accord to ſacrifice, or who do not refuſe when urged to it. But ſurely your admired Homer ſhould teach you never to rejoice at the death of any man†." "And ye Jews ought to obey Moſes, who tells you, 'Thou ſhalt not ſee thy brother's aſs or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyſelf from him: thou ſhalt ſurely help

* Euſeb. B. 4. C. 15.—Fleury, B. 6—30.
† Odyſſ. xxii. v. 412.

help him to lift them up again*.' And Solomon ſays, 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth.'—For my part I would rather die, or undergo any ſufferings than contradict my conſcience in religious concerns†. Whence then proceed thoſe burſts of laughter and cruel ſcoffs of the Jews, pointed not only againſt thoſe who have ſacrificed, but againſt us? They inſult us with a malicious pleaſure to ſee our long peace interrupted.—Though we were their enemies, ſtill we are men.—But what harm have we done them? What have we made them to ſuffer? Whom have we ſpoken againſt? Whom have we perſecuted with unjuſt and unrelenting hatred? Whom have we compelled to worſhip idols? Have they no compaſſion for the unfortunate? Are they themſelves leſs culpable than the poor wretches, who, through the fear of men or of tortures, have been induced to renounce their religion?" He then addreſſed the Jews on the grounds of their own Scriptures, and ſolemnly placed before the Pagans the day of judgment.

The ſermon bore ſome reſemblance to Stephen's‡ in like circumſtances: It tended to beget conviction of ſin, and to lead men to feel their need of the Divine Saviour, according to the juſteſt views and in the ſoundeſt taſte of the Goſpel. He ſpake long, and was very attentively heard; and there is reaſon to hope that his exertions were not in vain. The people who ſurrounded him ſaid with Polemon, "Believe us, Pionius, your probity and wiſdom make us deem you worthy to live;—and life is pleaſant."—Thus powerfully did conſcience and humanity operate in their hearts. "I own," ſays the

* Deut. xxii. 4.

† Pionius adapts himſelf to his audience, and convicts them of guilt even by their own principles, a thing not hard to be done in all caſes,—except in thoſe of true Chriſtians, who never fail to ſhew their faith by their works.

‡ Acts of the Apoſtles, Chap. vii.

the martyr, "life is pleaſant, but I mean that eternal life which I aſpire after: I do not with a contemptuous ſpirit reject the good things of this life; but I prefer ſomething which is infinitely better: —I thank you for your expreſſions of kindneſs: I cannot, however, but ſuſpect ſome ſtratagem in it."

The people continued intreating him: and he ſtill diſcourſed to them of a future ſtate.—The well-known ſincerity and unqueſtionable virtues of the man ſeem to have filled the Smyrneans with veneration, and his enemies began to fear an uproar in his favour. "It is impoſſible to perſuade you then," ſaid Polemon. "I would to God I could," ſays Pionius, "perſuade you to be a Chriſtian!"

Sabina, by the advice of Pionius, who was her brother, had changed her name, for fear of falling into the hands of her pagan miſtreſs, who, in order to compel her to renounce Chriſtianity, had formerly put her in irons, and baniſhed her to the mountains, where the brethren ſecretly ſupported her with nouriſhment. She now called herſelf Theodota. "What God doſt thou adore?" ſays Polemon. "God Almighty," ſhe anſwered, "who made all things;—of which we are aſſured by his Word Jeſus Chriſt." "And what doſt THOU adore?" ſpeaking to Aſclepiades. "Jeſus Chriſt," ſays he. "What, is there another God?" ſays Polemon. "No," ſays he, "this is the ſame whom we come here to confeſs."—He, who worſhips the Trinity in Unity, will find no difficulty in reconciling theſe two confeſſions. Let him, who does not ſo worſhip, attempt it. One perſon pitying Pionius, ſaid, "Why do you that are ſo learned ſeek death in this reſolute manner?"

When

When carried to priſon, they found there a preſbyter named Lemnus,—a woman named Macedonia,—and another called Eutychiana, a Montaniſt.

Theſe all employed themſelves in praiſing God, and ſhewed every mark of patience and cheerfulneſs. Many pagans viſited Pionius, and attempted to perſuade him to renounce his religion:—His anſwers ſtruck them with admiration. Some perſons, who, by compulſion, had ſacrificed, viſited them and ſhed many tears. "I now ſuffer afreſh," ſays Pionius; "and methinks I am torn in pieces when I ſee the pearls of the Church trod under-foot by ſwine, and the ſtars of heaven caſt to the earth by the tail of the dragon *.—But our ſins have been the cauſe."

The Jews, whoſe character of bigotry had not been leſſened by all their miſeries, and whoſe hatred to Chriſt continued from age to age with aſtoniſhing uniformity, invited ſome of the lapſed Chriſtians to their ſynagogue. The generous ſpirit of Pionius was moved to expreſs itſelf vehemently againſt the Jews. Among other things he ſaid, "They pretend that Jeſus Chriſt died like other men by conſtraint. Was that Man a common felon, whoſe diſciples have caſt out devils for ſo many years? Could that man be forced to die, for whoſe ſake his diſciples, and ſo many others, have voluntarily ſuffered the ſevereſt puniſhment?"—Having ſpoken a long time to them, he requeſted them to depart out of the priſon.

Though the miraculous diſpenſations attendant on Chriſtianity form no part of the plan of this hiſtory, I cannot but obſerve on this occaſion, how ſtrongly their continuance in the third century is here atteſted. Pionius affirms, that devils were

* Rev. xii. 14.

were ejected by Chriſtians in the name of Chriſt; and he does this in the face of enemies, who would have been glad of the ſhadow of an argument to juſtify their bitterneſs, reſentment and perfidy.

The captain of the horſe came to the priſon, and ordered Pionius to go to the idol-temple. "Your biſhop Eudemon hath already ſacrificed." ſaid he. The martyr, knowing that nothing of this ſort could be done legally till the arrival of the proconſul, refuſed. The captain put a cord about his neck, and dragged him along with Sabina and others. They cried, "We are Chriſtians," and fell to the ground, that they might not enter the idol-temple. Pionius, after much reſiſtance, was forced into it and placed on the ground before the altar: and there ſtood the unhappy Eudemon, after having ſacrificed.

Lepidus, a judge, aſked; "What God do you adore?" "Him," ſays Pionius, "that made heaven and earth." "You mean him that was crucified?" "I mean him whom God the Father ſent for the ſalvation of men." The judges then wiſpered to one another, and ſaid,—"We muſt compel them to ſay what we wiſh."—Pionius heard them, and cried, "Bluſh, ye adorers of falſe gods: have ſome reſpect to juſtice, and obey your own laws: they enjoin you not to do violence to us; but merely to put us to death."

Then Ruffinus ſaid, "Forbear, Pionius, this thirſt after vain-glory." "Is this your eloquence?" anſwered the martyr: "Is this what you have read in your books? Was not Socrates thus treated by the Athenians? According to your judgment and advice HE ſought after vain-glory, becauſe he applied himſelf to wiſdom and virtue."—Ruffinus was ſtruck dumb.—The caſe was appoſite in a degree: Socrates, undoubtedly, ſuffered perſecution

ſecution on account of his zeal for moral virtue.

A certain perſon placed a crown on Pionius's head, which he tore in pieces before the altar: The pagans, finding their perſuaſions ineffectual remanded them to priſon.

A few days after this, the proconſul Quintilian returned to Smyrna, and examined Pionius. He, then, tried both tortures and perſuaſions in vain; and, at length, enraged at his obſtinacy, he ſentenced him to be burnt alive. The martyr went cheerfully to the place of execution, and thanked God, who had preſerved his body pure from idolatry. After he was ſtretched and nailed to the wood, the executioner ſaid to him, "Change your mind, and the nails ſhall be taken out." "I have felt them," anſwered Pionius: He then remained thoughtful for a-time; afterward he ſaid, "I haſten, O Lord, that I may the ſooner be a partaker of the reſurrection." Metrodorus, a Marcionite, was nailed to a plank of wood in a ſimilar manner: They were then both placed upright; and a great quantity of fuel was heaped around them.—Pionius, with his eyes ſhut, remained motionleſs, abſorbed in prayer while the fire was conſuming him. At length he opened his eyes, and looking cheerfully on the fire, ſaid, "Amen;"—his laſt words were, "Lord, receive my ſoul."—Of the particular manner in which his companions ſuffered death we have no account.

In this narrative we ſee the ſpirit of heavenly love triumphing over all worldly and ſelfiſh conſiderations. Does not the zeal of Pionius deſerve to be commemorated as long as the world endures? The man appears to have forgotten his ſufferings: He is wholly taken up in vindicating the

the divine truth to the laſt.—Who can doubt of his having been a faithful preacher of the Goſpel? He is intent on the bleſſed work amidſt his bittereſt pains.—Glorious exemplification of true religion in its ſimplicity!

If there be any thing particular in the treatment he underwent, it conſiſts in the repeated endeavours which were made to preſerve his life. —The MAN was much reſpected, though the Chriſtian was abhorred. Integrity and uprightneſs, when eminent and ſupported by wiſdom and learning, fail not to overawe, to captivate, and to ſoften mankind. The voice of natural conſcience pleads; but cannot overcome the enmity of the human heart againſt God.

There are many good reaſons which may be aſſigned why ſound learning ought to be cultivated by Chriſtians, and eſpecially by all who mean to be paſtors of Chriſt's flock. The caſe of Pionius clearly intimates this. Knowledge never fails to enſure reſpect. It does this a thouſand times more effectually with mankind than birth or wealth, or rank, or power.—It is evident that Pionius was a man of learning, and that his perſecutors eſteemed him on that account, and took pains to detach him from Chriſtianity.—We may conceive how uſeful this accompliſhment had been in the courſe of his miniſtry.

Further—A Montaniſt and a Marcionite are his fellow-ſufferers. The latter is conſumed with him in the flames. Doubtleſs, from all the information of antiquity, both theſe hereſies appear in an odious light. But there might be exceptions, and who ſo likely to be among thoſe exceptions, as thoſe who ſuffered? We muſt not confine the truth of godlineſs to any particular denomination. Providence, by mixing perſons of very oppoſite parties

parties in the ſame ſcene of perſecution, demonſtrates that the pure faith and love of Jeſus may operate in thoſe who cannot own each other as brethren: I know not whether Pionius and Metrodorus did ſo on earth: I truſt they do ſo in heaven.

In Aſia a merchant, named Maximus, was brought before Optimus the proconſul, who inquired after his condition? "I was born free," ſaid he, "but I am the ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt." "Of what profeſſion are you?" "I live by commerce." "Are you a Chriſtian?" "Though a ſinner, yet I am a Chriſtian." While the uſual proceſs of perſuaſions and of tortures was going forward;—he exclaimed,—"Theſe are not torments which we ſuffer for the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: They are wholeſome UNCTIONS." —Such was the effect of the Holy Ghoſt ſhedding the love of God in Chriſt abroad in the human heart!—He was ordered to be ſtoned to death *.

All this time the perſecution raged in Egypt with unremitting fury. In the lower Thebais there was a young man named Paul, to whom, at fifteen years of age, his parents left a great eſtate. He was a perſon of much learning, of a mild temper, and full of the love of God. He had a married ſiſter, with whom he lived. Her huſband was baſe enough to deſign an information againſt him, in order to obtain his eſtate. Paul, having notice of this, retired to the deſert mountains, where he waited till the perſecution ceaſed. Habit, at length, made ſolitude agreeable to him. He found a pleaſant retreat, and lived there to the age of fourſcore and ten years. At the time of his retirement he was twenty-three, and he lived to be a hundred

* Fleury, B. 6—40.

hundred and thirteen years old*. This is the firſt diſtinct account of an hermit in the Chriſtian Church.—No doubt ought to be made of the genuine piety of Paul.—Thoſe, who, in our days, condemn ALL Monks with indiſcriminating contempt, ſeem to make no allowance for the prodigious change of times and circumſtances. Reflect ſeriouſly on the ſort of ſociety to which Chriſtians were expoſed in the reign of Decius: Was there a day,—an hour, in which they could enjoy its comforts, or ſecure its benefits? Where could Chriſtian eyes or ears direct their attention,—and not meet with objects exceedingly diſguſting? If Paul preferred ſolitude in ſuch a ſeaſon, we need not be more ſurpriſed than we are at the conduct of Elijah the prophet.—But, why did he not, with the return of peace, return alſo to the diſcharge of ſocial duties?—The habit was contracted; and the love of extremes is the infirmity of human nature.—Beſides a heart, breathing the pureſt love to God, might naturally enough be led to think the perfection of godlineſs beſt attainable in ſolitude.—The increaſing ſpirit of ſuperſtition ſoon produced a number of imitations of Paul: and the moſt lamentable effect was, that thoſe, who poſſeſſed only external religion, placed their righteouſneſs and their confidence in monaſtic auſterities;—and thus, from the depraved imitations of well-meant beginnings, one of the ſtrongeſt ſupports of falſe religion gradually ſtrengthened itſelf in the Chriſtian world.

Here we cloſe the account of the Decian perſecution. Its author is admired by Pagan writers. What has been ſaid of Trajan and Antoninus is applicable to him: He was a moraliſt; and he was a cruel perſecutor.—It cannot be denied, that for

* Fleury, B. 6—48.

for thirty months the Prince of Darkneſs had full opportunity to gratify his malice and his fury. But the Lord meant to chaſten and to purify his Church,—not to deſtroy it. The whole ſcene is memorable on ſeveral accounts.—It was not a local or intermitting, but an univerſal and conſtant perſecution: and, therefore, it muſt have tranſmitted great numbers to the regions where ſin and pain ſhall be no more.—The peace of thirty years had corrupted the whole Chriſtian atmoſphere: The lightning of the Decian rage refined and cleared it. No doubt, the effects were ſalutary to the Church. External Chriſtianity might indeed have ſtill ſpread, if no ſuch ſcourge had been uſed; but the internal ſpirit of the Goſpel would, probably, have been extinguiſhed. The ſurvivors had an opportunity of learning, in the faithfulneſs of the martyrs, what that ſpirit is; and men were again taught, that HE alone, who ſtrengthens Chriſtians in their ſufferings, can effectually convert the heart to true Chriſtianity.—The ſtorm, however, proved fatal to many individuals who apoſtatized; and Chriſtianiry was, in that way, cleared of many falſe friends. We have alſo noticed two collateral evils.—Both the formation of ſchiſms and of ſuperſtitious ſolitudes had their date from the Decian perſecution.

CHAP. XII.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF GALLUS.

THE ſucceſſor of Decius allowed the Church of Chriſt a little tranquillity. During that ſpace the two ſmall treatiſes of Cyprian concerning the lapſed and concerning unity, were, doubtleſs, of ſome ſervice in recovering the lapſed to a ſtate of penitence, and in diſpoſing the minds of men to preſerve the unity of the Church. In the former of theſe treatiſes, indeed, it muſt be confeſſed he carries his cenſure of the Novatians too far. The ſin and the danger of rending the body of Chriſt might have been ſtated in the ſtrongeſt terms, without pronouncing the evil to be abſolutely damnable: This was carrying the matter beyond all bounds of moderation. But the ſame candour which ſhould incline one to apprehend that Novatian was influenced by good intentions, in his too rigid ſcheme, pleads alſo for the motives of Cyprian's zeal in the maintenance of unity.—He ſeems to have conſidered the miſchief as moſt exceedingly deſtructive; and he can find no terms ſufficiently ſtrong to expreſs his deteſtation of it.

But Gallus ſoon began to diſturb the peace of the Chriſtians, though not with the inceſſant fury of his predeceſſor.—A Roman preſbyter, named Hyppolitus, had been ſeduced into Novatianiſm; but his mind had not been perverted from the faith

faith and love of Jeſus. He was now called on to ſuffer martyrdom, which he did with courage and fidelity. Either curioſity or a deſire of inſtructive information induced ſome perſons to aſk him in the laſt ſcene of his ſufferings, whether he ſtill perſiſted in the communion of Novatian? He declared in the moſt explicit terms, that he now ſaw the affair in a new light,—that he repented of having encouraged the ſchiſm,—and that he died in the communion of the general Church.—Such a teſtimony muſt have weakened the influence of the ſchiſm*.

In this perſecution of Gallus it was that Cornelius confeſſed the faith of Chriſt, and was baniſhed, by the emperor, to Civita Vecchia; which gave occaſion to a congratulatory letter from Cyprian. In one part of it he reflects on the Novatians with his uſual vehemence:—The reſt breathes a fervent ſpirit of piety and charity, and throws a ſtrong light on two hiſtorical facts;—namely,—that the perſecution of Gallus was ſevere;—and, that the Roman Chriſtians bore it with becoming and exemplary fortitude.

"We have been made acquainted, deareſt brother, with the glorious teſtimonies of your faith and virtue; and we have received the honour of your confeſſion with ſuch exultation, that, in the praiſes of your excellent conduct, we reckon ourſelves partners and companions. For, as we have but one Church, united hearts, and indiviſible concord, what paſtor rejoices not in the honours of his fellow-paſtors as his own? Or what brotherhood does not every where exult in the joy of brothers? We cannot expreſs how great was our joy and gladneſs when we heard of your proſperous

* Fleury, B. 7. x.

perous fortitude;—that at Rome YOU were the leader of the confeſſion, and, moreover, that the confeſſion of the leader ſtrengthened, in the brethren, their diſpoſition to confeſs;—that while you led the way to glory, you incited many to be companions of your glory; ſo that we are at a loſs which moſt to celebrate,—your active and ſteady faith, or the inſeparable love of the brethren. The virtue of the biſhop in leading the way was publicly admired; while the union of the brethren in following him was proved beyond contradiction: There was but one mind and one voice among you all. The Apoſtle foreſaw, in ſpirit, this faith and firmneſs of the whole Roman Church, which have ſhone ſo illuſtriouſly; and, in praiſing the primitive fathers, he ſtirs up their future ſons to an imitation of their courage and patience. Your unanimity and perſeverance is a great and an inſtructive example to the brethren. Ye have taught largely the important leſſon of fearing God, of firmly adhering to Chriſt, of uniting paſtors with the people, brethren with brethren in one common danger: ye have proved,—that a concord thus formed is invincible;—that the God of peace hears and anſwers the joint prayers of the peace-makers.—With terrible violence the adverſary ruſhed to attack the ſoldiers of Chriſt; but was bravely repulſed.

He had hoped to ſupplant the ſervants of God, by finding them, like raw ſoldiers, unprepared: He had hoped to circumvent a few individuals; but he found them united for reſiſtance: and he learnt,—that the ſoldiers of Jeſus remain on the watch ſober and armed for the battle;—that they cannot be conquered;—that they may die; but that they are invincible on this very account, becauſe they fear not death;—that they reſiſt not aggreſſors,

aggreſſors, ſince it is not lawful for them, though innocent, to kill the guilty*; and laſtly—that they readily give up their life and ſhed their blood, in order that they may the more quickly depart from an evil world in which wickedneſs and cruelty rages with ſo much fierceneſs. What a glorious ſpectacle under the immediate eyes of God! What a joy in the ſight of Chriſt and of his Church, that—not a ſingle ſoldier, but the whole army together, endured the warfare! Every individual, who heard of this proceeding, has joined in it: How many lapſed are reſtored by this glorious confeſſion! For now they have ſtood firm; and, by the very grief of their penitence, are made more magnanimous: Their former fall may now be juſtly conſidered as the effect of ſudden tremor; but they have returned to their true character: they have collected real faith and ſtrength from the fear of God, and have panted for martyrdom.

As much as poſſible we earneſtly exhort our people not to ceaſe to be prepared for the approaching conteſt, by watching, faſting, and prayers. Theſe are our celeſtial arms: theſe are our fortreſſes and weapons. Let us remember one another in our ſupplications: Let us be unanimous and united: and let us relieve our preſſures and diſtreſſes by mutual charity: And whoſoever of us ſhall firſt be called hence, let our mutual love in Chriſt continue; and let us never ceaſe to pray to our merciful Father for all our brethren and our ſiſters.

Thus ardent was the ſpirit of Cyprian in the expectation of martyrdom! And ſo little account did

* A plain proof of the paſſiveneſs of Chriſtians, ſtill continued from the Apoſtolic age, under the moſt unjuſt treatment.

did he make of temporal things! And, in this natural and eaſy manner, did he eſteem the dreadful ſcenes of perſecution as matter of joy.

He himſelf was preſerved, for the uſe of the Church, beyond the life of Gallus, as well as of Decius.—Cornelius died in exile: His faithfulneſs in ſuffering for Chriſt evinces all along whoſe ſervant he was;—otherwiſe, hiſtory affords little evidence reſpecting his character.—The little ſpecimen, which we have of his writings, will induce no one to think highly of his genius or capacity.

It is no wonder that Cyprian, who had ſeen and known ſuch dreadful devaſtations under Decius, finding, after a very ſhort interval, the perſecution renewed by Gallus, ſhould be attempted to imagine the approach of Antichriſt,—the end of the world,—and the day of judgment to be at hand. Sagacious and holy men are never more apt to be deceived than when they attempt to look into futurity. God hath made the preſent ſo much the excluſive object of our duty, that he will ſcarce ſuffer even his beſt and wiſeſt ſervants to gain reputation for ſkill and foreſight by any conjectures concerning the times and the ſeaſons, which he hath reſerved in his own power. The perſecution of Gallus proved, however, a light one compared with that of Decius. Under very formidable apprehenſions of it Cyprian wrote an animating letter to the people of Thibaris*. The miſtaken idea I have mentioned, probably, added ſpirit to the epiſtle; nevertheleſs, the reaſoning is ſolid; and his arguments and the Scriptures, which he quotes, deſerve attention in all ages.—A few extracts may gratify the reader.

"I had intended, moſt dear brethren, and wiſhed,—if circumſtances had permitted, agreeably to the deſires you have frequently expreſſed,—myſelf to

* Epiſ. 56.

to have come among you; and, to the beſt of my poor endeavours, to have ſtrengthened the brotherhood with exhortations. But urgent affairs detain me at Carthage; I cannot make excurſions into a country ſo diſtant as yours; nor be long abſent from my people.—Let theſe letters then ſpeak for me.

You ought to be well aſſured, that the day of affliction is at hand; and, that the end of the world and the time of Antichriſt is near: We ſhould all ſtand prepared for the battle, and think only of the glory of eternal life and of the crown of Chriſtian confeſſion. Nor ought we to flatter ourſelves that the imminent perſecution will reſemble the laſt:—a heavier and more ferocious conflict hangs over us, for which the ſoldiers of Chriſt ought to prepare themſelves with ſound faith and vigorous fortitude; and conſider that they* daily drink the cup of the blood of Chriſt, for this reaſon,—that they themſelves may be able to ſhed their blood for HIM.—To follow what Chriſt hath taught and done is to be willing to be found with Chriſt. As John the Apoſtle ſays; "He, that ſaith he abideth in Chriſt, ought himſelf alſo to walk even as he walked." Thus alſo the bleſſed Apoſtle Paul exhorts and teaches, ſaying, "We are the ſons of God, and if ſons, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Chriſt, if we ſuffer with him that we may alſo be glorified togerher." Let no man deſire any thing now which belongs to a periſhing world; but let him follow Chriſt, who lives for ever, and who makes his ſervants to live, if indeed they be ſettled in the faith of his name. For the time is come, moſt dear

† The daily reception of the Lord's ſupper appears to have been the practice of the African Church at that time.

dear brethren, which our Lord long ago foretold, ſaying, "The hour is coming, when whoſoever killeth you will think he doeth God ſervice." In his uſual manner he quotes thoſe Scriptures which relate to perſecution: and, doubtleſs, the force and beauty of them would then be felt and admired, more than they are by us, who, it is to be feared, are apt to ſpeculate upon them at our eaſe with too much indifference.

Obſerve how juſtly he arms their minds againſt the diſcouragement which the circumſtances of approaching perſecution are apt to induce. "Let no one, when he ſees our people to be ſcattered through fear of perſecution, be diſturbed, becauſe he ſees not the brethren collected, nor the biſhops employed among them. We, whoſe principles allow us to ſuffer death, but not to inflict it, cannot poſſibly, in ſuch a ſeaſon, be all in one place. Wherever, therefore, in thoſe days, by the neceſſity of the time, any one ſhall be ſeparated, in body, not in ſpirit, from the reſt of the flock,—let not ſuch an one be moved at the horror of the flight, nor be terrified by the ſolitude of the deſert, while he retreats and lies hid. No man is alone, who has Chriſt for his companion: No man is without God, who, in his own ſoul, preſerves the temple of God undefiled. The Chriſtian may indeed be aſſailed by robbers or by wild beaſts among the mountains and deſerts; he may be afflicted by famine, by cold, and by thirſt; he may loſe his life in a tempeſt at ſea,—but the SAVIOUR himſelf watches his faithful ſoldier fighting in all theſe various ways; and is ready to beſtow the reward which he has promiſed to give in the reſurrection."

He then produces precedents of Scripture-ſaints, who ſuffered for God in the moſt antient times,

times, and adds, "How ſhameful muſt it be for a Chriſtian to be unwilling to ſuffer when the Maſter ſuffered firſt; to be unwilling to ſuffer for our own ſins, when he, who had no perſonal ſin, ſuffered for us*. The Son of God ſuffered that he might make us the ſons of God:—and, ſhall not the ſons of men be willing to ſuffer that they may continue to be eſteemed the children of God?

Antichriſt is come, but Chriſt is alſo at hand.—The enemy rages and is fierce, but the Lord is our defender: and he will avenge our ſufferings and our wounds."—He again makes appoſite Scripture-quotations.—That from the Apocalypſe is remarkable, "If any man worſhip the beaſt and his image, &c." REV. xiv. 9.

"O what a glorious day," continues Cyprian, "will come, when the Lord ſhall begin to recount his people, and to adjudge their rewards;—to ſend the guilty into hell;—to condemn our perſecutors to the perpetual fire of penal flame;—and to beſtow on us the reward of faith and of devotedneſs to him. What glory! what joy! to be admitted to ſee God;—to be honoured; to partake of the joy of eternal light and ſalvation with Chriſt the Lord YOUR GOD; to ſalute Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the Patriarchs, and Prophets, Apoſtles, and Martyrs; to joy with the righteous, the friends of God, in the pleaſures of immortality! —When that revelation ſhall come, when the beauty of God ſhall ſhine upon us, we ſhall be as happy as the deſerters and rebellious will be miſerable in inextinguiſhable fire."

Such

* I have tranſlated this literally. The difference between ſuffering for our own ſins and ſuffering for us is ſtriking; the firſt is corrective, the ſecond is by imputation. Cyprian believed the atonement of Chriſt, and therefore varied his phraſeology to prevent miſtakes.

Such are the views of the next life which this good biſhop ſets before Chriſtians.—The palm of heavenly-mindedneſs belonged to theſe perſecuted ſaints: and I wiſh, with all our theological improvements, we may attain to a meaſure of this zeal amidſt the various good things of this life, which as Chriſtians, we at preſent certainly enjoy.

Lucius was choſen biſhop of Rome in the place of Cornelius; but was immediately driven into exile by the authority of Gallus. Cyprian congratulated him both on his promotion and on his ſufferings. His exile muſt have been of ſhort
A. D. duration. He was permitted to return to Rome
252. in the year two hundred and fifty-two; and a ſecond congratulatory letter was written to him by Cyprian *. He ſuffered death ſoon after; and was ſucceeded by Stephen.—The epiſcopal ſeat at Rome was then, it ſhould ſeem, the next door to martyrdom.

It was not owing to any diminution of his uſual zeal and activity, that the African biſhop was ſtill preſerved alive, while three of his contemporaries at Rome, Fabian, Cornelius, and Lucian, died a violent death or in exile. About this time he dared to write an epiſtle to a noted perſecutor of thoſe times, named Demetrianus: and, with great freedom and dignity, he expoſed the unreaſonableneſs of the pagans in charging the miſeries of the times upon the Chriſtians. There will be no neceſſity to give any detail of his reaſonings on the ſubject:—Paganiſm has at this day no defenders.—The latter part of the epiſtle, which is exhortatory and doctrinal, ſhall be afterwards conſidered, when we come to make an eſtimate of Cyprian's theological works.

The

* Epiſ. 58.

The ſhort reign of Gallus was diſtinguiſhed by ſo large an aſſemblage of human miſeries, as to give a plauſible colour to Cyprian's miſtake of the near approach of the end of the world. A dreadful peſtilence broke out in Africa, which daily carried off numberleſs perſons; and frequently ſwept away whole houſes. The pagans were alarmed beyond meaſure: They neglected the burial of the dead through fear, and violated the duties of humanity. The bodies of many lay in the ſtreets of Carthage, and in vain ſeemed to aſk the pity of paſſengers*.—It was on this occaſion,—that the Lord ſtirred up the ſpirit of Chriſtians to ſhew the practical ſuperiority of their religion; and, that Cyprian, in particular, exhibited one of the moſt brilliant proofs of his real character. He gathered together his people, and expatiated on the ſubject of mercy. He pointed out to them,—that if they did no more than others,—no more than the heathen and the publican did in ſhewing mercy to their own, there would be nothing ſo very admirable in their conduct;—that Chriſtians ought to overcome evil with good, and, like their heavenly Father, to love their enemies, ſince he makes his ſun to riſe on the evil and the good, and ſends rain on the juſt and the unjuſt. Why does not he, who profeſſes himſelf a ſon of God, imitate the example of his Father? We ought to anſwer to our birth, and thoſe, who appear to be born again of God, ſhould not degenerate, but ſhould be ſolicitous to evidence the genuineneſs of their relation to God by the imitation of his goodneſs. Much more than this Pontius tells us was ſaid by him.—But Pontius is always very ſcanty in his informations.

The eloquent voice of Cyprian, on this occaſion as on others, rouſed the alacrity of his people. The

* Vit. Pont.

The Chriſtians ranked themſelves into claſſes for the purpoſe of relieving the public diſtreſs. The rich contributed largely: the poor gave what they could; namely, their labour with extreme hazard of their lives:—The pagans ſaw with aſtoniſhment the effects of the love of God in Chriſt; and had a ſalutary opportunity of contraſting theſe effects with their own ſelfiſhneſs and inhumanity.

The dreadful calamity of the plague gave to Cyprian an opportunity of impreſſing on the minds of his people, what in truth had been the ruling object of his own life ſince his converſion, namely—a warm and active regard for the bleſſings of immortality, joined with an holy indifference for things below. He publiſhed on this occaſion his ſhort treatiſe on mortality. He, who wrote it, muſt have felt what all have need to feel,—how little a thing life is,—how valuable the proſpect of heavenly bliſs! The whole of this little tract is very precious; but the reader muſt be content with a few extracts.

"The kingdom of God, my deareſt brethen, ſhews itſelf to be juſt at hand. The reward of life, the joy of eternal ſalvation, perpetual gladneſs, and paradiſe lately loſt,—all theſe things come into our poſſeſſion now that the world paſſes away: Heavenly and eternal glories ſucceed earthly, fading trifles. What room is there for anxiety, ſolicitude, or ſadneſs, unleſs faith and hope are wanting? If, indeed, a man be unwilling to go to Chriſt, or does not BELIEVE that he is going to reign with him, ſuch an one has good reaſon to fear death: For, the "juſt live by faith."—Are ye then juſt; Do ye live by faith; Do ye really believe in the promiſe of God?—If ſo,—why do ye not feel ſecure of the faithfulneſs of Chriſt; why do ye not embrace his call, and bleſs your-

ſelves

ſelves that ye ſhall ſoon be with him and be no more expoſed to Satan?"

He then makes an appoſite uſe of the caſe of good old Simeon, and adds,

"Our ſtable peace, our ſound tranquillity, our perpetual ſecurity is in the world to come:—In this world we wage a daily war with our ſpiritual enemies; we have no reſt: If one ſin be ſubdued, another is up in arms:—We are continually expoſed to temptations; but the divine laws forbid us to yield to them.—Surely, amidſt ſuch conſtant preſſures we ought to be joyful in the proſpect of haſtening to Chriſt by a ſpeedy departure. How does our Lord himſelf inſtruct us on this very head? Ye ſhall weep and lament, but the world ſhall rejoice; and ye ſhall be ſorrowful, but your ſorrow ſhall be turned into joy.—Who does not wiſh to be free from ſorrow? Who would not run to take poſſeſſion of joy? Since then to ſee Chriſt is joy, and ſince our joy cannot be full till we do ſee HIM,—what blindneſs, what infatuation is it, to love the penal preſſures and tears of the world, and not to be deſirous of quickly partaking of that joy which ſhall never paſs away!

The cauſe of this, dear brethen, is UNBELIEF: We none of us believe really and ſolidly thoſe things to be true which the God of Truth promiſes,—whoſe word is eternally firm to thoſe that put their truſt in him. If a man of a grave and reſpectable character promiſes you any thing, you do not doubt his performance, becauſe you know him to be faithful. Now God himſelf ſpeaks with you; and dare you waver in uncertainty? HE promiſes you immortality when ye ſhall depart out of this world; and will ye ſtill doubt?—This is not to know God: This is to offend, with the ſin of unbelief, Chriſt the Lord and Maſter of believers:

—"To

—"To me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain," ſaid the bleſſed Apoſtle,—who computed it to be gain indeed,—no longer to be detained in the ſnares of the world,—no longer to be obnoxious to ſin and the fleſh,—to be exempt from excruciating preſſures,—to be freed from the poiſonous jaws of Satan, and—laſtly, to go to the joys of eternal ſalvation upon the call of Chriſt."

Some of Cyprian's people happened to be ſtaggered in their minds, becauſe they found that Chriſtians were liable to be afflicted with the plague as others: Upon which, the biſhop explained to them,—that IN SPIRIT the children of God are indeed ſeparated from the reſt of mankind; but that, in all other reſpects, they are obnoxious to the common evils of human life. In his uſual manner he ſupports his precepts by Scripture-examples; and ſpeaks eloquently and ſolidly of the benefits of afflictions, and of the opportunity of ſhewing what ſpirit they are of. "Let that man fear to die," ſays he, "who has a ſecond death to undergo; who is not born of water and the ſpirit; who is not a partaker of the croſs and paſſion of Chriſt; and whom eternal flame will torment with perpetual puniſhment. To ſuch an one life is indeed a deſirable object, becauſe it delays his condemnation:—but what have good men to dread from death?—THEY are called by it to an eternal refreſhment.—There is, however, great uſe in a ſeaſon of uncommon mortality: It rouſes the idle; compels deſerters to return; and produces faith in the gentiles: It diſmiſſes and ſends to reſt many old and faithful ſervants of God; and it raiſes freſh and numerous armies for future battles.

We ſhould conſider and think again and again, that we have renounced the world and live here

as

as ſtrangers. What ſtranger loves not to return to his own country? Let us rejoice in the day which ſummons us to our home.—There, a great number of dear friends await us: What raptures of mutual joy to ſee and embrace one another."

The active as well as the paſſive graces of Cyprian were kept in perpetual exerciſe by various calamities, which happened at no great diſtance of time from each other. The madneſs of men has ever been generating the horrors and miſeries of war, and there have never been wanting poets and hiſtorians to celebrate the praiſes of thoſe who have moſt exceeded others in ſhedding human blood.—It belongs to narrations purely Chriſtian to record, with a modeſt, yet firm approbation, the actions of holy men, whom the world deſpiſes, but whom the grace of God leads to the exerciſe of real love to God and men.—Mark another inſtance of Cyprian's truly Chriſtian benevolence. Numidia, the country adjoining to Carthage, had been bleſſed with the light of the Goſpel, and a number of Churches were planted in it. By an irruption of the barbarous nations, who neither owned the Roman ſway, nor had the leaſt acquaintance with Chriſtianity, many Numidian converts were carried into captivity. Eight biſhops, Januarius, Maximus, Proculus, Victor, Modianus, Nemeſian, Nampulus, and Honoratus, wrote the mournful account to the prelate at Carthage. What he felt and did on the occaſion his own anſwer will beſt explain. The love of Chriſt and the influence of his holy Spirit will appear to have been not ſmall in the African Church from this and from the foregoing caſe; nor will the calamities of the times and the ſcourge of perſecution ſeem to have been ſent to them in vain *.

"With

* Epiſ. 60. Pam.

"With much heart-felt ſorrow and tears we read your letters, deareſt brethren, which ye wrote to us in the ſolicitude of your love concerning the captivity of our brethren and ſiſters. For who would not grieve in ſuch caſes? or who would not reckon the grief of his brother his own? ſince the Apoſtle Paul ſays, "If one member ſuffer, all the members ſuffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the other members rejoice with it;" and elſewhere, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Therefore now the captivity of our brethren is to be reckoned OUR captivity; and the grief of thoſe who are in danger is to be reckoned as OUR OWN grief, ſince we are all one body:—Not only our affections, but the religion of Jeſus itſelf ought to incite us to redeem the brethren: For, ſince the Apoſtle ſays, in another place, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" It follows, that even if our love did not induce us to help the brethren, yet, in ſuch circumſtances, we ought to conſider, that they which are taken, are the temples of God, and that we ought not, by a long delay and neglect, to ſuffer the temples of God to remain in captivity, but to labour with all our might, and quickly to ſhew our obſequiouſneſs to Chriſt our Judge, OUR LORD, AND OUR GOD. For whereas Paul the Apoſtle ſays, "As many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have been baptized into his death;" Chriſt is to be viewed as exiſting in our captive brethren; and HE, who dwells and abides in us, muſt, by a ſum of money, be redeemed from captivity, and ſnatched from the hands of the barbarians;—HE, who by his croſs and blood*, redeemed

* Redemption by the blood of Jeſus, union and fellowſhip with

redeemed us from death, and ſnatched us from the jaws of Satan.—In fact, HE ſuffers theſe things to happen, in order that our faith may be tried, and that it may be ſeen whether we be willing to do for another what every one would wiſh to be done for himſelf, were he a priſoner among the barbarians. For who, if he be a father, does not now feel as if his ſons were in ſtate of captivity? Who,—if a huſband,—is not affected as if his own wife were in that calamitous ſituation? This muſt be the caſe, if we have but the common ſympathy of men.—Then how great ought our mutual ſorrow and vexation to be on account of the danger of the virgins who are there held in bondage! Not only their ſlavery, but the loſs of their chaſtity is to be deplored: the BONDS of barbarians are not ſo much to be dreaded as the lewdneſs of men, leſt the members of Chriſt dedicated to him, and devoted† for ever to the honour of continency, ſhould be defiled and inſulted by libidinous ſavages.

Our brethren, ever ready to work the work of God, but now much more quickened by great ſorrow and anxiety to forward ſo ſalutary a concern, have freely and largely contributed to the relief of the diſtreſſed captives. For, whereas the Lord ſays in the Goſpel, "I was ſick, and ye viſited me;" with how much ſtronger approbation would he ſay, "I was a captive, and ye redeemed me!" and when again he ſays, "I was in priſon, and ye came to me;" how much more is it in the ſame ſpirit to ſay, "I was in the priſon of

with him maintained in the ſoul by faith, and the returns of love anſwerable to his loving kindneſs, theſe are the principles of Chriſtian benevolence.

† Voluntary celibacy, I apprehend, was in growing repute in the Church at that time. St. Paul's advice in the 7th of firſt Cor. had then many followers, but monaſtic vows had yet no exiſtence.

of captivity and lay ſhut up and bound among barbarians, and ye freed me from the dungeon of ſlavery: Ye ſhall receive your reward of the Lord in the day of judgment!"

Truly we thank you very much that ye wiſhed us to be partakers of your ſolicitude, and of a work ſo good and neceſſary;—that ye have offered us fertile fields in which we might depoſit the ſeeds of our hope with an expectation of an exuberant harveſt. We have ſent a hundred thouſand ſeſterces,—the collection of our clergy and laity* of the Church of Carthage, which you will diſpenſe forthwith according to your diligence. Heartily do we wiſh that no ſuch thing may happen again, and that the Lord may protect our brethren from ſuch calamities. But if, to try our faith and love, ſuch afflictions ſhould again befall you, heſitate not to acquaint us; and be aſſured of the hearty concurrence of our Church with you both in prayer and in cheerful contributions.

That you may remember, in your prayers, our brethren, who have cheerfully contributed,—I have ſubjoined the names of each;—I have added alſo the names of our colleagues in the miniſtry, who were preſent and contributed, in their own names and in that of the people; and, beſides my own proper quantity, I have ſet down and ſent their reſpective ſums. We wiſh you, brethren, always proſperity."

About this time, Cyprian wrote to an African biſhop, named Cæcilius, for the purpoſe of correcting a practice in the adminiſtration of the Lord's Supper, which had crept into ſome Churches,—of uſing water inſtead of wine.—With arguments

* About 781l. 5s. ſterling.—See Notes to Epiſ. 62. Oxford Edit.

ments drawn from the Scriptures, he inſiſts on the neceſſity of wine in the ordinance, as a proper emblem of the blood of Chriſt.—But let it ſuffice to have barely mentioned this ſubject.

The appointment of Stephen to the biſhopric of Rome was ſoon followed by the death of Gallus; who was ſlain, in the year two hundred and fifty-three, after a wretched reign of eighteen months. A. D. 253.

CHAP. XIII.

THE PACIFIC PART OF VALERIAN'S REIGN.

UNDER Gallus the peace of the Church of Chriſt ſeems to have been very ſhort and precarious. But his ſucceſſor Valerian, for upwards of three years, proved their friend and protector. His houſe was full of Chriſtians, and he appears to have had a ſtrong predilection in their favour.

The Lord exerciſes his people in various ways. There are virtues adapted to a ſtate of proſperity as well as of adverſity.—The wiſdom and love of God, in directing the late terrible perſecutions, have been plainly made manifeſt by the excellent fruits.—Let us now attend to the tranſactions of Chriſtians during this interval of refreſhment.

The affairs of Cyprian detain us long, becauſe his eloquent pen continues to attract us; and becauſe we would not loſe a faithful and an able guide, till we are compelled to leave him.—Probably, there were many before his time, whoſe Chriſtian actions would have equally deſerved to be commemorated: But the materials of information fail us: The fine compoſitions of this biſhop are ſtill, however, a capital ſource of hiſtorical inſtruction.

During the tranquillity under the emperor Valerian, a council was held in Africa by ſixty-ſix biſhops with Cyprian at their head. The object of this aſſembly

aſſembly was, doubtleſs, the regulation of various matters relating to the Church of Chriſt.—Theſe biſhops had, unqueſtionably, each of them, a ſmall dioceſe; and with the aſſiſtance of their clergy, they ſuperintended their reſpective juriſdictions according to the primitive mode of Church-government. The face of Africa, which is now covered with Mahometan, idolatrous, and piratical wickedneſs, afforded in thoſe days a very pleaſing ſpectacle; for we have good reaſon to believe that a real and ſalutary regard was paid to the various flocks by their eccleſiaſtical ſhepherds. But, we have no particular accounts of the proceedings of this council beyond what is contained in a letter of Cyprian, to which I ſhall preſently advert. He mentions two points, which engaged their attention;—but, it is very likely, that matters of greater importance than either of thoſe points were then reviewed:—The ſynod was worthy of the name of Chriſtian: many of the biſhops then preſent had faithfully maintained the cauſe of Chriſt during ſcenes of trial the moſt ſevere that can be imagined; and I know no ground for ſuſpecting the clergy of thoſe times to have been influenced by ſchemes of political ambition for increaſing their wealth or power.

A preſbyter, named Victor, had been re-admitted into the Church without having undergone the legitimate time of trial in a ſtate of penance, and alſo without the concurrence and conſent of the people. His biſhop Therapius had done this arbitrarily and contrary to the inſtitutes of the former council for ſettling ſuch matters. Cyprian, in the name of the council, contents himſelf with reprimanding Therapius; but yet confirms what he had done, and warns him to take care of offending in future.

This is one of the points. And, we ſee hence that a ſtrict and godly diſcipline, on the whole, now prevailed in the Church; and that the wiſeſt and moſt ſucceſsful methods of recovering the lapſed were uſed. The authority of biſhops was firm, but not deſpotic: and the ſhare of the people, in matters of eccleſiaſtical correction and regulation appears worthy of notice.

The other point he thus explains in the ſame letter addreſſed to Fidus: "As to the care of infants, of whom you ſaid that they ought not to be baptized within the ſecond or third day after their birth, and that the ancient law of circumciſion ſhould be ſo far adhered to, that they ought not to be baptized till the eighth day, we were all of a very different opinion. We all judged that the mercy and grace of God ſhould be denied to none. For, if the Lord ſays in his Goſpel, "the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave them," how ought we to do our utmoſt, as far as in us lies, that no ſoul be loſt! Spiritual circumciſion ſhould not be impeded by carnal circumciſion. If, even to the fouleſt offenders when they afterwards believe, remiſſion of ſins is granted, and none is prohibited from baptiſm and grace; how much more ſhould an infant be admitted;—who, juſt born, hath not ſinned in any reſpect, except, that being carnally produced according to Adam, he hath, in his firſt birth, contracted the contagion of the ancient deadly nature;—and who obtains the remiſſion of ſins with the leſs difficulty, becauſe not his own actual guilt, but that of another, is to be remitted?

Our ſentence therefore, deareſt brother, in the council was, that none, by us, ſhould be prohibited

bited from baptiſm and the grace of God who is merciful and kind to all."

I purpoſe carefully to avoid diſputes on ſubjects of ſmall moment. Yet to omit a word here on a point, which hath produced volumes of ſtrife, might ſeem almoſt a ſtudied affectation: On ſuch occaſions I ſhall briefly and pacifically ſtate my own views, as they appear deducible from evidence.

Inſtead of diſputing whether the right of infant-baptiſm is to be derived from Scripture alone, and whether tradition deſerves any attention at all, I would obſerve,—that the Scripture itſelf ſeems to ſpeak for an infant-baptiſm*;—and further, that tradition, in matters of cuſtom and diſcipline, is of real weight, as appears from the confeſſion of every one; for every one is glad to ſupport his cauſe by it, if he can:—and, in the preſent caſe, —to thoſe who ſay that the cuſtom of baptizing children was not derived from the apoſtolical ages, the traditional argument may fairly run in language nearly Scriptural, "if any man ſeem to be contentious, we have no ſuch a cuſtom, neither the Churches of God†:"—and we never had any ſuch cuſtom as that of confining baptiſm to adults.

Here is an aſſembly of ſixty-ſix paſtors, men of approved fidelity and gravity, who have ſtood the fiery trial of ſome of the ſevereſt perſecutions ever known, and who have teſtified their love to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in a more ſtriking manner than any Antipædo-baptiſts have had an opportunity of doing in our days; and, if we may judge of their religious views by thoſe of Cyprian,—and they are all in perfect harmony with him,—they are not wanting in any fundamental of godlineſs. No man in any age more reverenced the Scriptures,

* 1 Cor. vii. 14. † 1 Cor. xi. 16.

tures, and made more copious uſe of them on all occaſions than he did; and,—it muſt be confeſſed, —in the very beſt manner. For he uſes them continually, for PRACTICE, not for OSTENTATION; for USE, not for the ſake of VICTORY in argument.—Before this holy aſſembly a queſtion is brought,—not whether infants ſhould be baptized at all,—none contradicted this,—but whether it is right to baptize them immediately, or on the eighth day. Without a ſingle negative they all determined to baptize them immediately. This
A. D. tranſaction paſſed in the year two hundred and
253. fifty-three. Let the reader conſider: If infant-baptiſm had been an innovation, it muſt have been now of a conſiderable ſtanding: The diſputes concerning Eaſter and other very unintereſting points ſhew, that SUCH an innovation muſt have formed a remarkable æra in the Church. The number of hereſies and diviſions had been very great. Among them all ſuch a deviation from apoſtolical practice as this MUST have been remarked. To me it appears impoſſible to account for this ſtate of things, but on the footing that it had EVER been allowed; and, therefore, that the cuſtom was that of the firſt Churches. Though, then, I ſhould wave the argument drawn from that ſentence of St. Paul, "Elſe were your children unclean, but now are they holy;"—and yet it is not eaſy to explain its meaning by any thing elſe than infant-baptiſm,—I am under a neceſſity of concluding, that the antagoniſts of infant-baptiſm are miſtaken. Yet I ſee not why they may not ſerve God in ſincerity, as well as thoſe who are differently minded. The greateſt evil lies in the want of charity; and in that contentious eagerneſs, with which ſingularity, in little things, is apt to be attended. Truly good men have not always

always been free from this;—perhaps few perſons, on the whole, cultivated larger and more generous views than our African prelate;—yet, in one inſtance, we ſhall preſently ſee, he was ſeduced into a bigotry of ſpirit not unlike to that which I here diſapprove, and, at the ſame time, greatly lament.

I could have wiſhed that Chriſtian people had never been vexed with a controverſy ſo frivolous as this about baptiſm: but having, once for all, given my views and the reaſons of them, I turn from the ſubject, and obſerve further,—that there is, in the extract of the letter before us, a ſtrong and clear teſtimony of the faith of the ancient Church concerning the doctrine of original ſin. One may ſafely be allowed to reaſon, on that head, in the ſame way as in the caſe juſt now conſidered; but the fulneſs of Scripture concerning ſo momentous a point precludes the neceſſity of traditional arguments. A lover of divine truth will, however, not be diſpleaſed to find—that, without contradiction, Chriſtians in the middle of the third century did believe, that men were born in ſin and under the wrath of God through Adam's tranſgreſſion, and, by their connexion with him as a federal head, were involved in all the conſequences of his offence. Such were the ſentiments of the antient Chriſtians in general;—of the very beſt Chriſtians,—who poſſeſſed the Spirit of Chriſt in the moſt powerful degree.—The juſt conſequences, which belong to this fact, are ſeldom attended to by perſons who are wiſe in their own conceit. —"Let us attend," ſay they, "to right reaſon,—to modern improvements in the interpretation of Scripture, and let us reject without ceremony the obſolete abſurdities of ancient ignorance:"—The real pradical meaning of which is this: We will torture

torture and twiſt in every poſſible direction the moſt perſpicuous paſſages of holy writ, rather than we will acknowledge them to contain doctrines, which we diſlike.—To ſubmit at once to the teſtimony of the Divine Word is, in itſelf, the moſt reaſonable thing in the world; but when men will not abide by that;—when they will ſubſtitute ſchemes of their own fancy and invention,—in the place of actual revelation,—and ſtill profeſs themſelves to be under the guidance of the Scriptures, it may then be very expedient to oppoſe and confute their unwarrantable conſtructions and criticiſms by the unanimous judgment of the primitive Church, who had the beſt opportunity of knowing the truth.—There is no unprejudiced mind, which will not feel the force of this argument.

The following private caſe,—which muſt have happened in time of peace,—and therefore may properly be referred to this period, deſerves, on account of the light, which it throws on primitive Chriſtian manners, to be diſtinctly recorded.

"Cyprian to Eucratius his brother. Health. Your love and eſteem have induced you, deareſt brother, to conſult me as to what I think of the caſe of a player among you; who ſtill continues to inſtruct others in that infamous and miſerable art, which he himſelf hath learnt. You aſk, whether he ſhould be allowed the continuance of Chriſtian communion? I think it very inconſiſtent with the majeſty of God, and the rules of his Goſpel, that the modeſty and honour of the Church ſhould be defiled by ſo baſe and infamous a contagion. In the law* men are prohibited to wear female attire, and are pronounced abominable; how much more criminal muſt it be, not only

* Deut. xxii. 5.

only to put on women's garments, but alſo to expreſs laſcivious, obſcene, and effeminate geſtures in a way of inſtructing others!—By theſe means boys will not be improved in any thing that is good, but abſolutely ruined in their morals.

And let no man excuſe himſelf, as having left the theatre, while yet he undertakes to qualify others for the work. You cannot ſay that the man has ceaſed from his buſineſs, when he provides ſubſtitutes in his own place; and furniſhes the playhouſe with a number of performers inſtead of one; and teaches them, contrary to the divine ordinances, to confound, in their apparel, the proper and decent diſtinctions of the ſexes; and ſo gratifies Satan by the defilement of the divine workmanſhip.—If the man makes poverty his excuſe, his neceſſities may be relieved in the ſame manner as thoſe of others, who are maintained by the alms of the Church, provided he be content with frugal and ſimple food, and do not fancy that we are to hire him, by a ſalary, to ceaſe from ſin; ſince it is not OUR intereſt, but HIS OWN, that is concerned in this affair. But,—let his gains by the ſervice of the playhouſe be ever ſo large,—What ſort of gain is that, which tears men from a participation in the banquet of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and leads them from their miſerable and ruinous feaſting in this world to the puniſhments of eternal famine and thirſt? Therefore,—if poſſible,—recover him from this depravity and infamy to the way of innocence and to the hope of life, that he may be content with a parſimonious, but ſalutary maintenance from the Church. And, if your Church be inſufficient to maintain its own poor*, he may transfer himſelf to

* Eucratius was the biſhop of a place called Thenæ, lying in the military road to Carthage.

to us;—and he ſhall here receive what is neceſſary for food and raiment:—He muſt, however, no longer teach his pernicious leſſons; but himſelf endeavour to learn ſomething from the Church that may be uſeful to his ſalvation. Deareſt ſon, I wiſh you conſtant proſperity*."

The deciſion of Cyprian is, doubtleſs, that, which piety and good ſenſe would unite to dictate in the caſe.—A player was ever an infamous character at Rome; and was looked on as incapable of filling any of the offices of ſtate. The Romans, at the ſame time that they ſhewed, in this point, the ſoundneſs of their political, evinced the depravity of their moral, ſenſe: For there were ſtill maintained by them, at the public expenſe and for the public amuſement, a company of men, who,—they knew,—muſt of neceſſity, be diſſolute and dangerous members of ſociety. If this was the judgment of ſober pagans, we need not wonder that the purity of Chriſtianity would not even ſuffer ſuch characters to be admitted into the boſom of the Church at all. To ſay, that there are noble ſentiments to be found in ſome dramas, anſwers not the purpoſe of thoſe, who would vindicate the entertainments of the ſtage. The ſupport of them requires a SYSTEM in its own nature corrupt;—a ſyſtem, which muſt gratify the voluptuous and the libidinous, or it can have no durable exiſtence. Hence, in every age, complaints have been made of the licentiouſneſs of the ſtage; and the neceſſity of keeping it under proper reſtraints and regulations has been admitted by its greateſt admirers. But it is, I think, a great miſtake to ſuppoſe that the ſtage may remain a favourite amuſement, and, at the ſame time, be ſo regulated as not to offend the modeſt eyes and ears of a humble Chriſtian. The graveſt advocates

* Ep. 61. Pam.

advocates for the theatre expect pleaſure from it rather than inſtruction: If, therefore, you believe that human nature is corrupt and impure, only aſk yourſelf what ſort of dramatic exhibitions and converſations will be moſt likely to meet with the applauſe of the people;—and you will ſoon be led to conclude, that the play-houſe is and muſt be a ſchool of impurity.

The firſt Chriſtians felt the force of this obvious argument, and they rejected the ſtage entirely.—A Chriſtian, renouncing the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and yet frequenting the playhouſe, was with them a ſoleciſm.—The EFFUSION of the Holy Spirit, which, during three centuries, we are now reviewing, never admitted theſe amuſements at all.—The profeſſion of the dramatic art—and the profeſſion of Chriſtianity were held to be abſolutely inconſiſtent with each other.

It is one of the main deſigns of this hiſtory to ſhew, practically, what true Chriſtians were, both in principles and in manners: and, in this view, the caſe before us is exceedingly inſtructive—What would Cyprian have ſaid, to ſee large aſſemblies of Chriſtians ſo called, devoted to theſe impurities, and ſupporting them with all their might, and deriving from them the higheſt delight?—"Such perſons muſt, certainly, be ſtrangers to the joy of the Holy Ghoſt; and I cannot but wonder why they chooſe to retain the name of Chriſtians."—Then, if he had examined their ſtage-entertainments, and compared them with thoſe that were in vogue in his own day,—Would he not have ſeen the ſame confuſion of ſexes,—the ſame encouragement of unchaſte deſires, and the ſame ſenſuality, with the ſame contemptuous ridicule of Chriſtianity?—if, indeed, in his time the

the Goſpel was ever burleſqued on a ſtage, as it has, frequently, been in ours.—In ſome points of leſſer conſequence, the ancient drama might differ from the modern; but, on the whole, the ſpirit and tendency was the ſame; and, doubtleſs, this excellent biſhop would have been aſtoniſhed to be told, that in a country, which called itſelf Chriſtian, actors and actreſſes and managers of playhouſes amaſſed large ſums of money;—that many exemplary clergymen could ſcarce find ſubſiſtence; and, that theologians of great erudition enliſted in the ſervice of the ſtage, and obtained applauſe by writing comments on dramatic poets.

There was a biſhop of Aſſuræ, named Fortunatus, who had lapſed in the time of perſecution, and who, without any marks of repentance, ſtill aſſumed to himſelf the epiſcopal character, and inſiſted on his being received as ſuch by the clergy and people. This caſe produced an epiſtle of Cyprian to the Church*, in which he as ſtrenuouſly oppoſes the ambitious claims of the biſhop as, in ſimilar circumſtances, he had formerly done thoſe of the laity; and he repeats the advice which he had before given to the lapſed, and cautions the people againſt the reception of him in his former rank and ſtation.—Behold now the ſtrenuous aſſertor of the right of faithful biſhops openly expoſing the pretenſions of unworthy ones, and inſtructing the people to guard themſelves againſt ſuch deluſions! What effect his epiſtle had, does not appear: The weight of his character, and the vigour of the diſcipline then happily prevalent in Africa, make it propable that it had the deſired ſucceſs.

Rogatian, an African biſhop, complained to Cyprian and his colleagues aſſembled in a ſynod, of

* Epiſ. 64.

of the inſolent and injurious behaviour of a deacon. Cyprian obſerves, that he might have done himſelf juſtice without taking this ſtep.—He applies the caſe of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to this of the haughty deacon, and takes notice very properly of the humble and unaſſuming carriage of our Lord toward the impious dignitaries of the Jewiſh Church. "He taught us," ſays he, "by his own behaviour towards falſe paſtors, how true ones ought to be fully and regularly honoured."

The following paſſage is, perhaps, the moſt ſtriking proof of any in Cyprian's writings, that the ideas of epiſcopacy were too lofty, even in that age, and that they had inſenſibly grown with the gradual increaſe of ſuperſtition.—Let it be remarked as a character of the ſpirit of thoſe times; and as an inſtance of the effect of that ſpirit on a mind the moſt pure and humble.

"Deacons ought to remember that the Lord choſe Apoſtles, that is, biſhops and rulers; but that the Apoſtles, after HIS aſcent into heaven, choſe to themſelves deacons, as the miniſters of their government and of the Church. Now if WE dare do any thing againſt God who makes biſhops, then may DEACONS dare to act againſt us by whom they are appointed."

Even the leaſt offenſive part of this compariſon is very unſeemly: Biſhops are, by no means, to be conſidered in the ſame light as Apoſtles.—His next obſervation is, however, ſtrictly juſt: "Theſe are the beginnings of hereſies, and the attempts of ill-diſpoſed ſchiſmatics to pleaſe themſelves and to deſpiſe with haughtineſs their ſuperiors:" He proceeds to adviſe the biſhop how to act concerning a turbulent deacon; and he does this with that happy mixture of firmneſs and charity, of which,

by

by a peculiarly intuitive diſcernment, he ſeldom failed to ſhew himſelf a maſter*.

Geminius Victor, by his will, appointed Fauſtinus, a preſbyter, a guardian. In an African ſynod, Cyprian and his colleagues wrote to the Church of Furnæ† a proteſt againſt the practice. —The clergy were then looked on as men wholly devoted to divine things: ſecular cares were taken out of their hands as much as poſſible.—Let this fact, alſo, be noted as one of the happy effects of the work of the Holy Ghoſt on the Church.

Novatianiſm had ſpread into Gaul; and Marcian, biſhop of the Church of Arelate, united himſelf to the ſchiſm. Fauſtinus, biſhop of Lyons, and ſeveral other French biſhops, wrote to Stephen of Rome on this ſubject. Fauſtinus wrote, alſo, concerning the ſame matter, to Cyprian of Carthage; who, in a letter to Stephen ſupported the cauſe of the general Church againſt the ſchiſmatics —Theſe facts are mentioned, for the purpoſe of ſhewing how the Goſpel which had ſo glorioufly begun at Lyons, in the ſecond century, muſt now have ſpread in France to a great degree.—Contentions and ſchiſms uſually have no place, till after Chriſtianity has taken deep root.

The ſame obſervation may be made reſpecting the progreſs of the Chriſtianity in Spain; where, by the inſcriptions of Cyriac of Ancona, it appears that the light of truth had entered in Nero's time. Two Spaniſh biſhops, Baſilides and Martial, had deſervedly loſt their paſtoral offices in the Church on account of their unfaithfulneſs in the perſecution. Cyprian and his colleagues in council wrote to confirm their depoſition: He ſhews that

* Epiſ. 66. † Epiſ. 67.

that the people no leſs than the clergy were bound to abſtain from communion with ſuch characters; and he ſupports his argument by the directions of Moſes to the children of Iſrael, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of theſe wicked men." He recommends*—that ordinations ſhould be performed in the ſight of all the people, that they might all have an opportunity to approve or to condemn the characters of the perſons ordained. He takes notice—that, in Africa, the neighbouring biſhops uſed to meet in the place where the new biſhop was to be ordained; and, that there he was choſen in the preſence of the people themſelves, who knew fully the life and converſation of every candidate. He obſerves—that Sabinus, who had been ſubſtituted in the room of Baſilides, had been ordained in this fair and equitable manner: and he cenſures Baſilides for going to Rome, and for gaining, by deceit, the conſent of Stephen to his being re-inſtated in his former dignity. Cyprian thinks—that his guilt was much aggravated by this conduct: and, in regard to Martial, who, it ſeems, had defiled himſelf with pagan abominations; he inſiſts,—that his depoſition ought to remain confirmed.

While theſe things ſhew the unhappy ſpirit of human depravity bearing down the moſt wholeſome fences of diſcipline, they evince, that there exiſted perſons at that time in the Chriſtian world, who exerted themſelves,—and that, not without ſucceſs,—to preſerve the purity of the Church.—And, if ever it ſhould pleaſe God to affect, with due care and zeal, the hearts of thoſe, who poſſeſs the power to reform our own eccleſiaſtical defects and abuſes, better guides and precedents than theſe,—next to the Scriptures,—will ſcarcely be found.

In

* Epiſ. 68.

A. D. 254. In the year two hundred and fifty-four, Pupian, a Chriſtian of diſtinction in Carthage, by letter accuſed Cyprian of ruling the Church with imperious ſway; and of ejecting members from it with great inſolence and haughtineſs. The African prelate had preſided now during ſix years, and had ſignalized himſelf, equally in perſecution and in peace, as the friend of piety, order, and diſcipline, and had exerted himſelf, in the uſe of every temporal and ſpiritual faculty, ſolely for the good of the falling and diſtempered Church: he ſaw, by this time, the great ſucceſs of his labours; and, it now behoved him to pay the tax, which eminent virtue ever does pay to ſlander and to envy.—A tax, no doubt, exceedingly irkſome and diſtreſſing;—nevertheleſs, neceſſary to prevent the riſings of pride, and to preſerve the moſt eminent Chriſtian humble before his God. Pupian believed, or affected to believe very unjuſt rumours, which were circulated againſt his paſtor; and ſaid, that the ſcruple of conſcience, with which he was ſeized, prevented him from owning the authority of Cyprian. He himſelf had ſuffered during the perſecution, and had been faithful; but, like Lucian, whom he, probably, reſembled both in virtues and weakneſſes, he was diſguſted at the backwardneſs of Cyprian in receiving the lapſed. This malcontent heavily complained of his ſeverity, while the Novatian party had ſeparated from their biſhop on account of his lenity. The beſt and wiſeſt characters have ever been moſt expoſed to ſuch inconſiſtent charges. It does not appear that Pupian was able to raiſe a ſecond ſect of diſſenters on oppoſite grounds to thoſe of the firſt: and we may hope that he reflected on his error, and returned into a ſtate of reconciliation with his biſhop. A few extracts from Cyprian's anſwer,—for we have not

not Pupian's letter,—may throw ſtill ſtronger light on the temper and principles of Cyprian, and afford us ſome ſalutary reflections.

To the charge of Pupian—that he was not poſſeſſed of humility, he anſwers thus: "Which of us is moſt deficient in humility?—I, who daily ſerve the brethren; and who, with kindneſs and pleaſure, receive every one who comes to the Church; or you, who conſtitute yourſelf the biſhop of the biſhop, and the judge of the judge appointed by God for a certain time? The Lord, in the Goſpel, when it was ſaid to him, "Anſwereſt thou the high prieſt ſo?" ſtill preſerving the reſpect due to the ſacerdotal character, ſaid nothing againſt the high prieſt, but only cleared his own innocence: and St. Paul, though he might have been juſtified in uſing ſtrong language againſt thoſe who had crucified the Lord, yet anſwers, "I wiſt not, brethren, that he was the High Prieſt; for it is written, thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the ruler of thy people."

Unleſs, indeed, you will ſay—that before the perſecution, when you were in communion with me, I was your paſtor; but that after the perſecution I ceaſed to be ſo.—I ſuppoſe, then, the perſecution exalted you to the high honour of a witneſs for Chriſt; and, at the ſame time, depreſſed me from my office by a heavy proſcription:—yet,—the very edict, which proſcribed me, acknowledged my rank as a biſhop*: Thus, even thoſe, who believed not God who appoints the biſhop, credited the devil who proſcribed him.

I ſpeak not theſe things in a way of boaſting, but with grief; ſince you ſet yourſelf up as a judge of

* The edict ran thus—"Whoever ſhall hold or poſſeſs any part of the goods of Cæcilius Cyprian, biſhop of the Chriſtians," &c.

of God and of his Chriſt, who ſays to the Apoſtles,—and, of conſequence, to all the biſhops, the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles,—"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me."—Hence hereſies and ſchiſm ariſe and muſt ariſe, whenever perſons preſumptuouſly deſpiſe the authority of the biſhop, who alone is the preſident of the Church:—What arrogance is this,—to call paſtors to YOUR cognizance; and unleſs they be acquitted at YOUR bar,—behold,—the brethren muſt be pronounced to have been without a biſhop for the laſt ſix years!

You ſay your ſcruples muſt be ſolved:—but, Why did not thoſe martyrs, who—full of the Holy Ghoſt,—ſuffered for God and his Chriſt;—Why did not many of my colleagues, and many of the people, who have been illuſtrious for their ſufferings, indulge ſimilar ſcruples? Muſt all—as you affirm—who have communicated with me, be conſidered as polluted, and as having loſt the hope of eternal life?—Pupian alone is upright,—inviolable,—holy,—chaſte: he muſt not mix with us: he muſt dwell ſolitary in paradiſe!!"

He then exhorts him to return to the boſom of the Church: but, at the ſame time, he informs him, that, in the matter of his re-admiſſion he ſhall be guided by intimations and admonitions from the Lord communicated to him, poſſibly, by viſions, and dreams.—This is a language not unuſual in Cyprian: but we know too little of the mode of diſpenſation which the Church, at that time, was under, to judge accurately concerning it:—certainly the age of miracles had not then ceaſed: and, certainly, inſtruction by dreams was very much the method uſed by God in Scripture:—To reject, therefore, wholly the poſitive declarations of a man of Cyprian's wiſdom and veracity,

veracity, would be inexcuſable temerity.—He, repeatedly, ſpeaks of the Lord's directions revealed to him in the manner above mentioned. If ſome expreſſions in the letter be allowed to ſavour of epiſcopal haughtineſs which was then growing in the Church, the main tenor of it, nevertheleſs, contains nothing but what Pupian ought to have attended to moſt ſeriouſly. A readineſs to believe ſtories, which tend to calumniate the worthieſt paſtors, is a ſnare which Satan has too ſucceſsfully laid for the members of the Church in all ages: and, doubtleſs, much greater circumſpection is required on this head, than many are diſpoſed to pay. The brotherly fellowſhip of Churches depends, in a great meaſure, on their endeavours to preſerve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Cyprian concludes in this nervous manner: "I have written theſe things with a pure conſcience, and in the firm reliance on my God.—You have my letters; I have yours; both will be recited in the day of judgment before the tribunal of Chriſt *."

A controverſy now aroſe among Chriſtians, while the pacific ſpirit of Valerian continued to protect them, which reflects no honour on any of the parties concerned in it. The queſtion was, whether perſons returning from hereſies into the Church ought to be re-baptized. The active ſpirit of Cyprian was employed, partly by a council in Africa, and partly by his letters, in maintaining that the baptiſm of heretics was null and void; and that, even, Novatian baptiſm ought to be looked upon in the ſame light. Stephen, biſhop of Rome, maintained, that, if perſons had been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, impoſition of

* Epiſt. 69.

of hands would then be ſufficient for their reception into the Church: The point was left undecided, becauſe no party had power to compel others; moſt Chriſtians, however, have long ſince agreed with Stephen; and, indeed, it is the voice of good ſenſe as well as of the Church of England,—that the efficacy of a ſacrament, rightly adminiſtered, depends not on the character of him that miniſters it. But the reſpect which Cyprian, not undeſervedly, had acquired by his labours, his ſufferings, and his abilities, procured him a much greater degree of ſtrength than either the importance of his cauſe or the weight of his arguments merited. Even Firmilian of Cappadocia in a long letter ſupported his ſide of the queſtion.—This biſhop, occaſionally, adverts to the caſe of a woman, who, about twenty-two years before the date of his letter, had profeſſed herſelf a propheteſs, and for a long time had deceived the brethren with her extatic raptures, till one of the exorciſts confuted her pretenſions. It may be worth while juſt to have mentioned this fact, as it ſhews that deluſions have ever been raiſed by Satan to diſgrace the work of God. It appears by the ſame letter*,—that Stephen behaved with much violence and aſperity in the conteſt;—that he did not even admit to a conference the brethren who came to him from diſtant parts if they happened to be of Cyprian's opinion;—but that he denied them the common rights of hoſpitality.—In the courſe of this controverſy Cyprian decided—and certainly with much propriety,—that thoſe†, whoſe weak ſtate of health did not permit them to be waſhed in water, were yet ſufficiently baptized by being ſprinkled:—He obſerves, that the virtue of baptiſm ought not to be eſtimated, in a carnal

* Epiſ. 75. † Epiſ. 76.

carnal manner, by the quantity of external apparatus.

How weak, alas, is man!—A peace of three years has ſet the members of the Church in a flame among themſelves,—and for a matter of trifling import!—And one of the beſt and wiſeſt men of his day, by zeal for unity and by caution againſt innovations, is betrayed into the ſupport of an indefenſible point of mere ceremony, which tends to the encouragement of ſuperſtition and the weakening of brotherly love!—How ſoon do we forget that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt!"—With what difficulty is the real love of Jeſus and its fruits preſerved among profeſſors of Chriſtianity! All this proves in the ſtrongeſt manner,—how mighty and gracious the Lord is in ſtill preſerving a Church in the earth;—how dark and corrupt is man;—how active and ſubtil is Satan;—how precious is that blood which cleanſes from all ſin;—and how true is that book which contains thete ſalutary doctrines and faithfully deſcribes the miſery of man!—How ſafely may we rely on the way of ſalvation which it teaches; and how pleaſing is the proſpect which it exhibits of the Church in heaven!

The reader would juſtly think the time ill-employed in unravelling the niceties of this trifling controverſy.—Beſides, our attention is called to more important matter:—God prepares a ſcourge for his froward children: Perſecution lowers again with renewed ſtrength; and Chriſtians are called on—to forget their idle internal ſquabbles,—to humble themſelves before HIM,—and to prepare for freſh ſcenes of horror and deſolation.

CHAP. XIV.

THE LAST ACTS AND MARTYRDOM OF CYPRIAN.

A. D. 257. THE change in the diſpoſition of Valerian towards the Chriſtians, which took place about the year of our Lord two hundred and fifty-ſeven, is one of the moſt memorable inſtances of the inſtability of human characters. In kindneſs to them he had ſurpaſſed all his predeceſſors. Even from Philip they had not experienced ſo much courteſy and friendſhip. His palace had, uſually, been full of the followers of Jeſus, and was looked on as a ſanctuary. But now, after he had reigned three years, he was induced, by his favourite Macrianus to commence a deadly perſecution. This man dealt largely in magical enchantments and abominable ſacrifices: he ſlaughtered children, and tore out the inteſtines of new-born babes*. The perſecution of Chriſtians was a cruel employment, worthy of a mind ſo faſcinated with diabolical wickedneſs and folly; and he found in Valerian but too prompt a diſciple. This freſh attack on the ſervants of Chriſt began in the year two hundred and fifty-ſeven, and continued during the remainder of the reign of this emperor;—namely, three years and a half. Stephen of Rome appears to have died a natural death about the beginning of it: For, there is no evidence of his martyrdom; and, therefore, we want

* Dyonyſius of Alex,—Euſeb. B, 7. C. 10,

want the proofs which might, in that caſe, have been afforded, whether his turbulent and aſpiring ſpirit was really combined with genuine Chriſtian affections.—He was ſucceeded by Sixtus.

Cyprian, who had eſcaped two perſecutions, was now made the victim of the third,—though by ſlow degrees, and with circumſtances of comparative lenity. Every thing relating to him is ſo intereſting, that it may not be amiſs to proſecute his ſtory, in a connected manner, to his death; and to reſerve the narrative of other objects of this perſecution till afterwards.

He was ſeized by the ſervants of Paternus the proconſul of Carthage, and brought into his council-chamber. "The ſacred emperors, Valerian and Gallienus," ſays Paternus, "have done me the honour to direct letters to me, in which they have decreed, that all men ought to adore the gods whom the Romans adore; and on pain of being ſlain with the ſword if they refuſe. I have heard that YOU deſpiſe the worſhip of the gods;—whence I adviſe you to conſult for yourſelf and to honour them." "I am a Chriſtian," replied the prelate, "and know no god but the one true God, who created heaven and earth, the ſea, and all things in them. This God we Chriſtians ſerve: To him we pray night and day for all men, and even for the emperors." "You will die the death of a malefactor, if you perſevere in this diſpoſition of mind*." "That is a good diſpoſition which fears God," anſwered Cyprian, "and therefore it muſt not be changed." "It is the will, then, of the princes, that, for the preſent, you ſhould be baniſhed." "He is no exile," replied the biſhop, "who has God in his heart, for the earth

* The paſſion of Cyprian in Pam. Edit.—Fluery's Hiſt. B. 7.

earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof." Paternus ſaid, "Before you go, tell me,—where are your preſbyters: They are ſaid to be in this city?"—With much preſence of mind Cyprian reminded him of the edicts made by the beſt Roman princes againſt the practice of informers: "They ought not, therefore, to be diſcovered by me; and you yourſelves do not approve of men, who offer themſelves voluntarily to you." "I will make you diſcover them by torments." "By me," the intrepid biſhop rejoined, "they ſhall not be diſcovered." "Our princes have ordered that Chriſtians ſhould hold no conventicles; and whoever breaks this rule ſhall be put to death." "Do what you are ordered," Cyprian calmly replied.

Paternus, however, was not diſpoſed to hurt Cyprian.—Moſt probably he reſpected the character of the man, who, by this time, muſt have been highly eſteemed in Africa on account of a ſhining ſeries of good works. After having made ſome ineffectual attempts to work on his fears, he ſent him into baniſhment to Curubis, a little town fifty miles from Carthage, ſituate by the ſea, over againſt Sicily. The place was healthy, the air good, and, by his own deſire, he had private lodgings. The citizens of Curubis, during the eleven months which he lived among them, treated him with great kindneſs; and he was repeatedly viſited by the Chriſtians.—In this ſhort interval Paternus died.

While the exiled prelate remained by the ſea-ſide ſerving his divine Maſter in holy meditations and uſeful actions to the beſt of his power and opportunity, he was informed that the perſecutors had ſeized nine biſhops, with ſeveral prieſts and deacons and a great number of the faithful, even virgins and children; and, after beating them with ſticks, had

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ſent them to work in the copper-mines among the mountains. Every one of theſe biſhops had been preſent at the laſt council of Carthage; their names were Nemeſian, Felix, Lucius, a ſecond Felix, Litteus, Polus, Victor, Jader and Dativus. I cannot account for the milder treatment which Cyprian received from the Roman governors in any other way than by ſuppoſing, that an extraordinary and reverential reſpect was paid to his ſuperior quality, labours, and virtues. Be that as it may, Providence certainly favoured him in a peculiar manner. But his ſympathizing ſpirit could not but be with his brethren:—His ſentiments and his feelings are ſtrongly expreſſed in a letter to Nemeſian and the reſt.

"Your glory requires, bleſſed and beloved brethren, that I ought to come and embrace you, were it not that the confeſſion of the ſame name has confined me alſo to this place: but if it be forbidden me to come to you in body, I am preſent with you in ſpirit and affection; and I endeavour to expreſs my very ſoul to you in letters. —How do I exult in your honours, and reckon myſelf a partner with you,—though not in ſuffering,—yet in the fellowſhip of love!—How can I hold my peace, when I hear ſuch glorious things of deareſt brethren! How hath the Divine diſpenſations honoured you! Part of you have already finiſhed the courſe of martyrdom, and are now receiving crowns of righteouſneſs from the Lord; and the reſt, as yet in priſons, or in mines and bonds, exhibit, in the tediouſneſs of their afflictions, ſtill greater examples of patience and perſeverance, which will arm and ſtrengthen the brethren, at the ſame time that theſe long-continued torments will advance the ſufferers to a higher proficiency in Chriſtian glory, and enſure to them a proportional reward in heaven.

In

In truth,—that the Lord has thus honoured you, affords me no ſurprize when I reflect on your blameleſs lives and faithfulneſs; your firm adherence to the divine ordinance; your integrity, concord, humility, diligence; mercy in cheriſhing the poor; conſtancy in defence of the truth; and ſtrictneſs of Chriſtian diſcipline:—And, that nothing might be wanting in you as patterns of good works, even now, by confeſſion with the mouth and by ſuffering with the body, you ſtir up the minds of the brethren to divine martyrdom, and diſtinguiſh yourſelves as leaders of eminent goodneſs; nor do I doubt, but that the flock will imitate their paſtors and preſidents, and be crowned, in like manner, by our common Lord.—That you have been grievouſly beaten with clubs, and have been initiated, by that puniſhment, in Chriſtian confeſſion, is a thing not to be lamented. The body of a Chriſtian trembles not on account of clubs: All his hope is in WOOD*. The ſervant of Chriſt acknowledges the emblem of his ſalvation: Redeemed by a croſs of wood to eternal life, by this wood he is advanced to his crown. O happy feet! ſhackled indeed at preſent with fetters; ye will quickly finiſh a glorious journey to Chriſt!—Let malice and cruelty bind you as they pleaſe, ye will ſoon paſs from earth and its ſorrows to the kingdom of heaven.—In the mines ye have not a bed on which the body may be refreſhed;—nevertheleſs, Chriſt is your reſt and conſolation: Your limbs are fatigued with labour and lie on the ground:

* I obſerve, once for all,—that the want of a juſt claſſical taſte like that of the Auguſtan age, and the exceſs of falſe rhetorical ornaments, appear every where in Cyprian's writings. This was not the defect of the man, but of the times: and the meanneſs of the pun in this place will be forgiven by all, who reliſh the preciouſneſs of the doctrine connected with it.

ground: but, ſo to lie down, when you have Chriſt with you, is no puniſhment.—Filth and dirt defile your limbs, and ye have no baths at hand; but, remember, ye are inwardly waſhed from all uncleanneſs.—Your allowance of bread is but ſcanty; be it ſo,—man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word of God. Ye have no proper clothes to defend you from the cold;—but he, who has put on Chriſt, is clothed abundantly."

He afterwards comforts them, by ſuitable arguments, under the loſs of means of grace and of public worſhip; and ſpeaks of the Lord as rewarding the patience and fortitude of his ſaints, which virtues are indeed his own work in their hearts. "For it is of him that we conquer; it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your Father which ſpeaketh in you."—He ſhews, hence, the great ſin of unbelief—in not truſting him who promiſes his aid to thoſe who confeſs him, and in not fearing him who threatens eternal puniſhment to thoſe who deny him. In concluſion, he begs their earneſt prayers,—that he and they may be freed from the ſnares and the darkneſs of the world; and that thoſe, who, in the bond of love and peace, had ſtood together againſt the injuries of heretics and the preſſures of the heathen, might together rejoice in the celeſtial manſions*.

Nemeſian and the other biſhops returned him an anſwer full of affection and gratitude, from three different places in which they were confined; and they acknowledge the pecuniary aſſiſtance which he had ſent them.

Cyprian wrote alſo to Rogatian the younger, and to other confeſſors who were in priſon,—moſt probably, at Carthage:—He animates them in his uſual manner, "to deſpiſe preſent afflictions through

* Epiſ. 78, 79, 80.

through the hope of future joys;" and he ſpeaks with much pleaſure of ſome women and boys who were partners of their ſufferings.—He recommends to them the example of the elder Rogation and of the ever-peaceable and ſober Feliciſſimus*, who had conſummated their martyrdom already.

A. D. 260. In the year two hundred and ſixty Cyprian was permitted to return from exile; and he lived in a garden near Carthage, which was now providentially reſtored to him, though he had ſold it at his firſt converſion. His liberal ſpirit would have inclined him once more to ſell it for the relief of the needy, if he had not feared leſt he ſhould excite the envy of the perſecutors. Here he regulated the affairs of the Church and diſtributed to the poor what he had left. He ſent meſſengers to Rome for the purpoſe of clearing up certain indiſtinct information which had been received concerning the perſecution having broken out afreſh; and he immediately communicated to the brethen† the following facts, namely—That Valerian had given orders that biſhops, preſbyters, and deacons ſhould be put to death without delay;—that ſenators, noblemen, and knights ſhould be degraded and deprived of their property; and, that if they ſtill perſiſted in being Chriſtians, they ſhould loſe their lives;—that women of quality ſhould be deprived of their property and baniſhed;—and that all Cæſar's freedmen, who ſhould have confeſſed, ſhould be ſtripped of their goods, be chained, and ſent to work on his eſtates. Theſe were Valerian's directions to the ſenate; and he ſent letters, to the ſame effect, to the governors of

* He thus diſtinguiſhes this humble, patient, martyr from the fictious character of the ſame name, Epiſ. 81.

† Epiſ. 82.

of provinces: "Theſe letters," ſaid Cyprian, "we daily expect to arrive. We ſtand, however, in the firmneſs of faith, in patient expectation of ſuffering, and in humble hope of obtaining, from the Lord's help and kindneſs, the crown of eternal life." He mentions alſo the daily ferocity with which,—he underſtood,—the perſecution was carried on at Rome in all its horrors: and, he gives a particular inſtance of it, in the martyrdom of Xyſtus the biſhop.—He begs that the intelligence may be circulated through Africa; "That we may all think of death; but not more of death than of immortality; and, that, in the fulneſs of faith, we may, rather with joy than with fear, expect the approaching events."

Galerius Maximus had ſucceeded Paternus in the proconſulate, and Cyprian was daily expected to be ſent for. In this awful criſis a number of ſenators and others, conſiderable for their offices or their quality, came to him. Ancient friendſhip melted the minds of ſome of them toward the man; and they offered to conceal him in country-places; but his ſoul was now thirſting for martyrdom. The uncertainty of tedious baniſhment could not be agreeable to one, who had had ſo much experience of that kind; and, Valerian's law being expreſsly levelled at men of his character, there ſeemed little probability left of his being long concealed. Further,—I believe the generous temper of this prelate would have been hurt, if the ſafety of his former pagan friends had been endangered on his account. He might, therefore, heſitate to accept their offers, though, according to the ſteady maxims of his conſcientious prudence, he would, by no means, do any thing to accelerate his own death. Pontius his deacon tells us,—that in oppoſition to the intemperate zeal of

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thoſe who were for giving themſelves up to the martyrdom, Cyprian had always, on this head, conſcientious fears, leſt he ſhould diſpleaſe God by throwing away his life. In fact, he continued ſtill at Carthage, exhorting the faithful, and wiſhing, that when he ſhould ſuffer martyrdom, death might find him thus employed in the ſervice of his God. Being informed, however, that the proconſul, then at Utica, had ſent ſoldiers for him, he was induced to comply, for a ſeaſon, with the advice of his friends, by retiring to ſome place of concealment, that he might not ſuffer at Utica, but,—that if he was called to martyrdom,—he might finiſh his life among his own people at Carthage: So he ſtates the matter in the laſt of his letters to the clergy and the people. "Here in this concealment, I wait for the return of the proconſul to Carthage, ready to appear before him, and to ſay what ſhall be given me at the hour. Do you, dear brethren,—Do you, agreeably to the inſtructions you have always received from me, continue ſtill and quiet: Let none of you excite any tumult on account of the brethren, or offer himſelf voluntarily to the Gentiles.—He, who is ſeized and delivered up, ought to ſpeak: The Lord, who dwells in us, will ſpeak at that hour: Confeſſion rather than profeſſion is our duty."

The proconſul returned to Carthage, and Cyprian returned to his garden. There he was ſeized by two officers, who had been ſent with ſoldiers for that purpoſe. They obliged him to ſit between themſelves in a chariot; and they conveyed him to a place named Sextus, ſix miles from Carthage, by the ſea-ſide. The proconſul lodged there on account of indiſpoſition; and he gave orders that Cyprian ſhould be carried back to the houſe of the

the chief officer, about the diſtance of a ſtadium* from the prætorium; and—that the conſideration of the buſineſs ſhould be deferred till the next day.—The news ſpread through Carthage: The celebrity of the biſhop, on account of his good works, drew prodigious crowds to the ſcene; not only of Chriſtians, but of infidels, who revered eminent virtue in diſtreſs.

The chief officer guarded him,—but, in a courteous manner; ſo that he was permitted to have his friends about him as uſual. The Chriſtians paſſed the night in the ſtreet before his lodgings; and the benevolence of Cyprian moved him to direct a particular attention to be paid to the young women who were among the multitude. The next day the proconſul ſent for Cyprian, who walked to the prætorium attended by a vaſt concourſe of people. The proconſul not yet appearing, he was ordered to wait for him in a private place. He ſat down, and being in a great perſpiration, a ſoldier, who had been a Chriſtian, offered him freſh clothes: "Shall we," ſays Cyprian, "ſeek a remedy for that which may laſt no longer than to day?" The arrival of the proconſul was announced, and this venerable ſervant of Chriſt was brought before him into the judgment-hall.—"Are you Thaſcius Cyprian?" "I am." "Are you HE whom the Chriſtians call their biſhop?" "I am." "Our princes have ordered you to worſhip the gods." "That I will not do." "You would judge better to conſult your ſafety, and not to deſpiſe the gods." "My ſafety and my ſtrength is Chriſt the Lord, whom I deſire to ſerve for ever." "I pity your caſe," ſays the proconſul, "and could wiſh to conſult for you." "I have no deſire," ſays

* A hundred and twenty-five paces.

ſays the prelate, "that things ſhould be otherwiſe with me, than that I may adore my God, and haſten to him with all the ardour of my ſoul;—for the afflictions of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us." The proconſul grew red with anger; and immediately pronounced ſentence of death in the following terms;—"You have lived ſacrilegiouſly a long time; you have formed a ſociety of impious conſpirators; you have ſhewn yourſelf an enemy to the gods and their religion, and have not hearkened to the equitable counſels of our princes; you have ever been a father and a ringleader of the impious ſect.—You ſhall, therefore, be an example to the reſt,—that, by the ſhedding of your blood, they may learn their duty. Let Thaſcius Cyprian, who refuſes to ſacrifice to the gods, be put to death by the ſword." "God be praiſed," ſaid the martyr; and while they were leading him away, a multitude of the people followed and cried,—"Let us die with our holy biſhop."

A troop of ſoldiers attended the martyr; and the officers marched on each ſide of him. They led him into a plain ſurrounded with trees, and many climbed up to the top of them to ſee him at a diſtance. Cyprian took off his mantle, and fell on his knees and worſhipped his God: then he put off his inner garment and remained in his ſhirt.—The executioner being come, Cyprian ordered twenty-five golden denarii to be given to him: he himſelf bound the napkin over his own eyes; and a preſbyter and a deacon tied his hands, and the Chriſtians placed before him napkins and handkerchiefs to receive his blood.—His head was then ſevered from his body by the ſword*.

His

* Acts of his Martyrdom. Paſſion of Cyprian in Pam. Pontius's Life of Cyprian, and Fleury's Hiſtory.

His biographer Pontius repreſents himſelf as wiſhing to have died with him; and, as divided between the joy of his victorious martyrdom, and ſorrow, that himſelf was left behind.

Thus,—after an eventful and inſtructive period of about twelve years ſince his converſion,—after a variety of toils and exerciſes among friends, and open foes and nominal Chriſtians, by a death more gentle than commonly fell to the lot of martyrs, reſted at length in Jeſus the truly magnanimous and benevolent ſpirit of Cyprian of Carthage.—An extraordinary perſonage ſurely! And, one, whoſe character calls for the moſt diſtinct review and illuſtration in our power!—An attempt of this ſort we would make in the next chapter, however imperfect, or inadequate it may prove.—Let writers, whoſe views are ſecular, celebrate their heroes, their ſtateſmen, and their philoſophers; but let us,—even though a Chriſtian's taſte be derided,—at leaſt take advantage of the rare felicity of the preſent times of civil liberty, and, endeavour, in employing the preſs, to do ſome juſtice to the virtues of men, who, while they lived, "ſet their affections on things above," and who, after death,—according to modern ſentiments of worth and excellence,—are, almoſt, aſſigned to contemptuous oblivion.——And, may their memorial be bleſſed for ever!!

CHAP. XV.

CYPRIAN COMPARED WITH ORIGEN.

THE eaſt and the weſt beheld at the ſame time theſe two men, in talents, activity, and attainments much ſuperior to the reſt of the Chriſtian world. The Roman ſeems, beyond contradiction, to have much excelled the Grecian in thoſe things in which true Chriſtian virtue conſiſts; yet, as the latter, by the FRUITS of his life, —though they were miſerably tarniſhed and clouded by a depraved philoſophy,—ſtill claims a juſt place among ſaints, it may anſwer ſome valuable purpoſe, not impertinent to the deſign of this hiſtory, to compare, in ſeveral particulars, the reſpective endowments, defects, and excellencies of theſe extraordinary men.

1. There may have been as pious and holy men as Cyprian, in the interval of time between the Apoſtles and him, but we have no opportunity of knowing any other Chriſtian ſo well. The diſtinct particularity of the accounts concerning him makes his character remarkably deſerving of our attention. The dealings of God with a ſinner, at his firſt converſion, often give a ſtrong tincture to the whole future life. Cyprian was intended for very great and important ſervices in the Church; and, thoſe—of an active nature, and attended with an almoſt uninterrupted ſeries of ſufferings;—ſuch as no man could perform to the glory of God, but one,

one, who knew aſſuredly the ground on which he ſtood, by a ſtrong work of the divine Spirit on his ſoul. His experience in converſion he himſelf deſcribes in his letter to Donatus.—His reception of Chriſtianity was not the effect of mere reaſoning or ſpeculation. It was not carried on in a ſcholaſtic or philoſophical manner, but may truly be ſaid to have been "in the demonſtration of the Spirit and of power." He felt the doctrines of the Goſpel,—namely, the grace of God; forgiveneſs of ſins by Jeſus Chriſt; and the influence of the Holy Ghoſt,—powerful, exuberant, and victorious. His ſoul was brought into the love of God, and that of the pureſt kind, tempered ever with humility and godly fear: and it is evident —that he always ſaw the work to be of God, and beheld nothing in himſelf as wiſe, holy, and glorious; and that a ſpirit of thankfulneſs for redeeming love, of ſimple dependence on the divine promiſes, and, of ſteady charity to God and man was the reſult. His race was of no long duration; only about twelve years; and by far the greater part of the time he was biſhop of Carthage. He lived a Chriſtian life; and no part of it was exempt from much labour or much affliction. He ſeems never to have known what it was to ſettle into a luke-warm ſtate. The fire which was firſt kindled in him, burnt ſerene and ſteady to the end of his days.—I am aware that Moſheim charges him with an ambitious, domineering ſpirit, that invaded the rights of the lower clergy and people *. But I take the liberty of aſſuring the cautious reader, that this excellent and very judicious SECULAR hiſtorian, is not to be truſted in his accounts of men of REAL HOLINESS. From the

* Eccleſ. Hiſtory, Century 3, Chap. 2.

the moſt attentive review which I have been able to make of the character of the African prelate, by a repeated peruſal of the exiſting evidence, eſpecially his epiſtles, I cannot ſee any thing on which to ground ſuch a cenſure. He did nothing, in general, without the clergy and people. He was ever ſedulous in promoting the good of the whole. The epiſcopal authority was, in his time, at no very blamable height in the Church: nevertheleſs, through the gradual growth of ſuperſtition, it was, naturally, advancing to an exceſs of dignity; and it is not to be denied that ſome few expreſſions ſavouring of haughtineſs and aſperity are to be found in the writings of Cyprian.—But theſe few expreſſions were evidently the effect of particular provocation;—nor is there the leaſt evidence that ambition was his vice. Candour would rather ſay, he was, in general, influenced by a very fervent zeal, ſupported in its exertions by a temper remarkably active and ſanguine. But, whoever looks into the original records with an expectation of finding any thing ſelfiſh, proud, or domineering in his general conduct, will be diſappointed; and, on the contrary, will be ſtruck with the ſteady tenor of gentleneſs, charity, and humility. In fine, if he had not been a CHRISTIAN, one might have held him forth to the world as a GREAT man;—if it be the part of a great man to unite, in a large and capacious mind, many virtues, and each of them in a high degree of perfection;—virtues too, which are oppoſite in their nature, and which rarely meet in firm conſiſtence in the ſame ſubject;—for example, vigour and mildneſs, magnanimity and mercy, fortitude and prudence, warmth of temper and accuracy of judgment, and, above all,—zeal and diſcretion.

In

In Origen's converſion we ſee nothing remarkable. He received Chriſtianity in a way of education, rather than by quick, lively, and deciſive operations of the Holy Spirit. It is not uſual with God to make uſe of SUCH perſons for extraordinary ſervices, like thoſe for which Cyprian, in the prime of life, appears to have been ſelected from the world. Origen's views of the peculiar truths of Chriſtianity were,—to ſay no more, too faint and general;—nor ever SUFFICIENTLY diſtinguiſhed from moral and philoſophical religion. He bore perſecution, when young, with much zeal and honeſty; but he lived many years in peace and proſperity. Much reſpected and ſought after by philoſophers, highly eſteemed and honoured by courts and by the great, he lived a ſcholaſtic rather than an active life in the Church; always fully employed indeed, but more like a man of letters than a miniſter of the Goſpel; ever bent on promoting truth and holineſs ſo far as he knew them; but always leaving one's mind diſſatisfied on account of the defectiveneſs of his views. His laſt ſcenes are the moſt ſatisfactory and the moſt deciſively Chriſtian. He ſuffered perſecution with the patience and honeſty of a martyr; and proved INDEED whoſe diſciple he was on the whole. Moſheim charges him with diſhoneſty in his arguments againſt Celſus; and ſays that any one that has penetration and judgment may diſcern it*. It would have been more to the purpoſe to have pointed out the inſtances of diſhoneſt argumentation, which he alludes to My examination of the tract in queſtion induces me to diſſent from this learned hiſtorian; and further, I am convinced that great uprightneſs of mind was a ruling feature

* Moſheim's Eccl. Hiſtory, Century 3, Chap. 3.

ture in Origen's character.—But it is not the practice of modern writers to be candid in their judgment of the antient Chriſtians.

After this general review of theſe two men, and, after it has been admitted that integrity and fairneſs of mind were poſſeſſed by both in a very great degree, it may be natural to aſk—In what conſiſted the ſuperior excellence of Cyprian?—The general anſwer to ſuch an enquiry is—The manner of their firſt converſion has appeared to have been ſtrikingly different in the two caſes; and ſtill more ſo—The work of God upon their hearts afterwards.—But beſides this,—

2. Cyprian was poſſeſſed of a ſimplicity of TASTE to which Origen ſeems ever to have been a ſtranger. By ſimplicity of taſte I mean here a genuine and unadulterated reliſh for the doctrine and ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion, juſt as it ſtands in its real nature. It is poſſible for a perſon very eminent in this gift,—which is purely divine and ſpiritual,—to be, in no way, remarkable for his knowledge of evangelical truth: In reſpect of knowledge he may not much exceed another who is far his inferior in the former grace of the Spirit: The light and means of information are very different in different ages of the Church; and it is evident that the third century ſuffered a decline in illumination. But where a man is deficient in knowledge, yet if his ſimplicity of Chriſtian taſte be very great, he will be ſilent on thoſe ſubjects which he does not underſtand, or at leaſt he will be extremely cautious in oppoſing any part of divine truth. This was Cyprian's caſe. He appears not, for inſtance, to have underſtood the doctrine of the election of grace. Since Juſtin's days the knowledge of that article of faith was departing from the Church

Church.—But, he oppoſed it not.—Origen, leſs humble and leſs ſubmiſſive to divine inſtruction, and feeling more reſources in his reaſoning powers, dares to oppoſe it by a contrary ſtatement *.

In Cyprian this ſimplicity appears in a ſupreme degree.—He never trifles with Scripture, or ſets up his reaſon againſt it. Unencumbered with the apparatus of Grecian philoſophy, and poſſeſſed of what is much better,—plain good ſenſe, he takes, always, the words of Scripture in their obvious, and moſt natural meaning; and thinks he has ſufficiently proved his point, when he has ſupported it by an appoſite quotation. His humble ſpirit bows to the divine word: and hence faith, patience, charity, heavenly-mindedneſs, have full dominion in his ſoul: and hence alſo, his ſentiments have a ſtrength, a purity, a perſpicuity, peculiarly the property of thoſe whoſe religious taſte is altogether ſcriptural. Here it is that Cyprian and Origen are diametrically oppoſite to each other. The latter is full of endleſs allegorical interpretations, and of platonic notions concerning the ſoul of the world, the tranſmigration of ſpirits, free-will, and the pre-exiſtence of ſouls. The firſt and ſimple ſenſe of Scripture he too often ventures to reject entirely †. David's ſin in the affair of Uriah he cannot admit. It ſeems, he had not ſuch ſtrong and palpable proof of his own innate depravity, as to ſuppoſe it poſſible for ſo good a man to fall ſo fouliy. He has recourſe, therefore, to a hidden and abſtruſe ſenſe. His numberleſs comments on Scripture conſtitute a ſyſtem of fanciful allegory, which pervades the whole of the ſacred oracles: The juſt and plain ſenſe

* Philocalia xxi. † Philoc. Chap. 1, page 20.

ſenſe is much neglected; and the whole is covered with thick clouds of myſticiſm and chimerical philoſophy. He labours, it is true, to ſupport the faith, which was once delivered to the ſaints; but, like his platonic maſter Ammonius, he introduces large quantities of figurative traſh, which will not incorporate with Chriſtian doctrine.—Thus, by accommodating his interpretations to the then reigning literary taſte, he gained to himſelf, indeed, a celebrity of character among the heathen, even among the great and noble, but threw all things into inextricable ambiguity.—His quickneſs of parts and his ſuperior ingenuity ſerved only to entangle him more effectually, and to enable him to move in the chaos of his own formation with an eaſe and rapidity that rendered him unconſcious of the difficulties in which he had involved himſelf.

One remarkable conſequence of this difference of character was, that while Origen, among the pagans, ſucceeded in gaining the favour of the great, and was heard by them with patience, Cyprian could not be endured in his preaching or writings,—except by real Chriſtians.—Another conſequence is this,—It is no eaſy thing to vindicate the ſoundneſs of the former in Chriſtian principles:—The latter challenges the ſevereſt ſcrutiny.—He is Chriſtian throughout.

Such is the difference between a man of ſimplicity and a man of philoſophy in religion; and the mind, on this occaſion, is led to compare the effect of a philoſophical and of a philological ſpirit. Origen had the former, Cyprian the latter. Eloquence was HIS diſtinguiſhing accompliſhment; and he poſſeſſed all the powers of it in a very high degree, according to the taſte of the age,—which was far from

from being the beſt. And here, I would humbly ſubmit to the conſideration of the pious and well diſpoſed,—whether the knowledge of grammar, hiſtory, criticiſm, and of oratory, theoretical and practical, properly regulated by common ſenſe and in ſubordination to divine grace, be not much leſs dangerous, and, in their way, more uſeful endowments for a miniſter of Chriſt than deep reſearches into philoſophy of any kind?—Far, very far, from meaning to inſinuate that the ſtudies of metaphyſics and of natural philoſophy ſhould be entirely excluded from the education of perſons, who mean to be paſtors,—I would be underſtood to ſuggeſt,—that a leſs proportion of THESE and a greater proportion of THOSE than what agrees with the preſent faſhionable taſte, might be more advantageous to the Church. The reaſoning powers might find in the former an uſeful exerciſe and improvement, without the ſame danger of preſumption which ſo ſtrongly adheres to the latter*.

3. Having compared the lives and the tempers of theſe men, let us now view the PRINCIPLES of each. Of Cyprian, after the many quotations already given from his writings, little need be added. Nevertheleſs, as it has lain more in our way to conſider him as addreſſing Chriſtians than pagans or infidels, I ſhall ſelect a letter of his to Demetrian, a perſecutor of Chriſtians in Africa, in which his manner of preaching to men altogether profane and unconverted is obſervable.

He

* Theſe ſentiments are certainly favoured by the compariſon of Cyprian and Origen.—It is true, this is only a ſingle inſtance of ſuch compariſon:—but, I believe, it will be very difficult to find examples of a contrary tendency.

He denounces to them the plain threatenings of eternal puniſhment. "There remains hereafter * an eternal priſon, conſtant flame, and perpetual puniſhment. There the groans of ſupplicants will not be heard, becauſe here they diſregarded the terror of God's indignation." He bids them ſolemnly look into themſelves, and appeals to the conſcience as affording full proof of guilt before God. And he aggravates the charge of condemnation; becauſe, amidſt the MISERIES of the times, men did not repent. After expoſing the folly of idolatry, and exhibiting, in lively colours, the all-important ſcenes of the laſt judgment, he concludes with this Chriſtian exhortation, which is introduced in the true taſte and order of things, after he had firſt denounced the terrors of the law. "Provide then for your ſecurity and life, while you may. We offer you the moſt ſalutary counſel; and becauſe we are forbidden to hate you or to requite evil, we exhort you, while there is time, to pleaſe God and to emerge from the profound night of ſuperſtition into the fair light of true religion. We envy not your advantages, nor do we hide the divine benefits. We return good will for your hatred; and, for the torments and puniſhments, which are inflicted upon us, we ſhew you the paths of ſalvation.—Believe and live; and do ye, who perſecute us for a time, rejoice with us for ever. When you depart hence, there will be no room for repentance: no method of being reconciled to God: here, eternal life is either loſt or ſecured; here, by the worſhip of God and the fruit of faith, proviſion is made for eternal ſalvation:—and let no man be retarded, either by his ſins or by his years, from coming to obtain it. No

* Pam. ad Demetrian.

No repentance is too late, while a man remains in this world.

An acceſs lies open to the grace of God; and, to thoſe, who ſeek and underſtand the truth, the acceſs is eaſy. Even, in the very exit of life, pray for remiſſion of ſins, and implore the only living and true God with confeſſion and faith: Pardon is granted to him who confeſſes his ſin; and ſaving grace from the divine goodneſs is conferred on the believer; and, thus may a man paſs from death to immortality in his very laſt moments. By ſubduing death through the trophy of his croſs, by redeeming the believer with the price of his blood, by reconciling man to God the Father, and by quickening the dead with celeſtial regeneration, Chriſt imparts to us theſe great mercies. HIM, if it be poſſible, let us all follow;—let us be baptized in his name. HE opens to us the way of life; he brings us back to paradiſe. He leads us to the heavenly kingdom: and we ſhall always live with him. By him made ſons of God, we ſhall rejoice with him for ever: Redeemed by his blood, we ſhall be Chriſtians with Chriſt in glory: we ſhall be the bleſſed of God the Father; and ſhall give him thanks to all eternity.—The man, who was obnoxious to death, and has been made a ſure partaker of immortality, cannot but be filled with joy and gratitude for evermore."

With ſuch an affectionate ſpirit, and with ſuch clearneſs of doctrine did Cyprian preach juſtification, BY FAITH ONLY, to the unconverted. It muſt not be denied,—that, in his addreſs to men, who had already "taſted that the Lord is gracious," there is not the ſame degree of evangelical purity. In his Opere and Eleemoſynis, he ſays very excellent things on the duty of alms-giving: but he ſometimes uſes language that might eaſily be

be conſtrued into the language of merit; and as he had not learnt to diſtinguiſh the Apocrypha from the Old Teſtament, he ſupports his ideas with quotations from Tobit and Eccleſiaſticus. We have had,—what he had not,—an experience, of the evil tendency of any expreſſions which, in the ſmalleſt degree, countenance the ſuppoſition of the efficacy of human WORKS in waſhing away the pollution of ſin, whether contracted before or after baptiſm. We know too, from the dependence on divine grace and on the Spirit's illumination, which Cyprian and many other fathers of the ſame ſtamp habitually exerciſed,—beſides the the teſtimony of their holy lives,—that the ſame expreſſions mean not with them what they do in the mouths of moderns, full of ſelf-righteouſneſs and of contempt both of the grace of Chriſt and of the work of the Holy Ghoſt. We are ſure, that the former mean no oppoſition to the free gift of God, becauſe they are humble: whereas, it is but too evident, that the latter do,—becauſe they are proud and ſcorn the whole work of the Spirit God in the New Birth. It had been well, however, if ſaints had never given a handle to the prophane to adulterate the doctrines of the Goſpel. But I have before obſerved that Cyprian's views of grace were not equally clear with thoſe of the firſt Chriſtians: Yet, in every fundamental principle, he ſpeaks as the Oracles of God; and in his addreſſes to Pagans, Chriſtians, or Jews, he is always fervent and zealous. His Tract on Patience, as a practical performance, and that on the Lord's Prayer, as a doctrinal one, deſerve the higheſt praiſe. In general, his works are exellent in their kind, and he muſt have a poor taſte indeed in godlineſs who will not find the peruſal of them refreſhing to his ſoul. Nevertheleſs, Cyprian ſhines much

much more in practical than in ſpeculative divinity. The ſhortneſs of his Chriſtian life and the preſſure of his employments will eaſily account for this.

I wiſh it were as eaſy to clear the doctrinal character of Origen from reproach. The antients themſelves were much divided in their views of his opinion concerning the Son of God. It is certain that the Arians of the fourth century ſeemed to receive ſome countenance from him; and men, who had ſo very little aſſiſtance from precedents, were glad to catch at the ſhadow of an argument drawn from his illuſtrious name.—But what, if his Arianiſm were indeed full and confeſſed on all hands,—What would ſuch a fact avail as an argument,—I ſay, not againſt the Scriptures,—but againſt the joint conſent of the whole Church for three hundred years? Even the very oppoſition made againſt his character by many, ſhews how zealous the Church had ever been in the defence of the doctrine of the Trinity.—Here is open a wide field of controverſy; but little profit is to be expected from traverſing it.—The writings of Origen againſt Celſus, in which he ably defends Chriſtianity againſt philoſophy and paganiſm, and the Philocalia of the ſame author furniſh ſufficiently deciſive paſſages againſt Arian tenets,—if they were not embarraſſed by others of a more doubtful caſt.

It is probable, however, that one, who thought ſo rapidly, wrote ſo much, and had his eyes ſo ſteadily fixed on his philoſophy, muſt have dropped many things, which he would not have ſeriouſly maintained if he had ever carefully reviewed them. That he never meant to hold any thing different from the general creed, may be inferred from the

pains

pains which he took againſt heretics, as well as from his general character. His erroneous ſentences, therefore, ought to be conſidered as containing queries and conjectures rather than ſettled opinions. Athanaſius muſt be allowed to have been a judge of this matter; and HE believed him to be ſound, and quoted his writings to prove our Lord's co-eternity and co-eſſentiality with the Father. And he, likewiſe, obſerves—that what things Origen wrote by way of controverſy and diſputation are not to be looked on as his own * ſentiments.

After all, the beſt defence of this great man conſiſts in the general holineſs of his life, and in his patient ſuffering for the faith of Chriſt in old age: And I rejoice that, amidſt all the traſh with which his writings abound, we have yet this unqueſtionable teſtimony—that he kept the commandments of God, and had the faith of Jeſus. The loſs of his voluminous commentaries, and of his other numerous works is, perhaps, not much to be regretted. There are two ſentences† in them which merit particular attention. He thus ſpeaks on the words, ROM. iii. "we conclude that a man is juſtified by faith, &c. "THE JUSTIFICATION OF FAITH ONLY IS SUFFICIENT; SO THAT IF ANY PERSON ONLY BELIEVE, HE MAY BE JUSTIFIED, THOUGH NO GOOD WORK HATH BEEN FULFILLED BY HIM;"—and again, on the caſe of the penitent thief, "he was juſtified by faith without the works of the law; becauſe, concerning theſe, the Lord did not enquire what he had done before; neither did he ſtay to aſk what work he was purpoſing to perform after he had believed;

* Cave's Life of Origen.

† See Biſhop Beveridge on the Articles of the Church of England.

believed;—but, the man being juſtified by his confeſſion only, Jeſus, who was going to paradiſe, took him as a companion and carried him there."

Thus, the precious doctrine of juſtification, though much ſullied and covered with rubbiſh, was yet alive, in the third century, even in the faith of the moſt dubious characters among the Ante-nicene fathers. This it was that kept Origen, with all "his hay and ſtubble," firm on Chriſtian foundations, and diſtinguiſhed him radically from an adverſary of Chriſt.

4. If we compare the public life of theſe two men, the Grecian ſhines in a ſcholaſtic, the Roman in a paſtoral capacity. Origen appears as an author, and moves in a ſphere calculated for the learned. Cyprian is a preacher, and, like the Apoſtles, addreſſes equally all ſorts of men. The latter, on account of the pride of corrupt nature, was moſt likely to be regarded by the poor: He valued not refinement of compoſition: His aim was to reach the heart and the conſcience, and to reduce every religious conſideration to real practice. Origen, however, was uſefully employed in untying knotty ſpeculations, in refuting hereſies, and in recommending Chriſtianity, or ſomething like Chriſtianity, to the learned world. No doubt, his labours would be of ſome advantage amidſt the miſchief, which the accommodating ſcheme produced; but the paſtoral exhortations of Cyprian, as they would not be received at all by prejudiced philoſophers, ſo, where they were received, left effects of unadulterated piety, through the divine influence that attended them. As a Chriſtian biſhop, ſcarcely any age has ſeen his ſuperior—in activity, diſintereſtedneſs, and ſteady at-

tention to diſcipline: He was equally remote from the extremes of negligent remiſſneſs, and impracticable ſeverity: and he poſſeſſed a charity and a patience unwearied, and ever conſiſtent. He may ſafely be recommended as a model to all paſtors, and particularly to thoſe of rank and dignity throughout Chriſtendom. Whoever feels a deſire to ſerve God in the moſt arduous and the moſt important of all profeſſions, may profitably,—next after the ſtudy of the ſacred oracles, give days and nights to Cyprian's writings.—All his genuine compoſitions,—if you except his correſpondence and controverſy with Stephen of Rome,—deſerve a diligent peruſal; yet no man muſt be expected to reliſh them thoroughly, unleſs he himſelf has experienced the new-birth unto righteouſneſs: A truly regenerated perſon will not only reliſh them, but alſo will not fail to be affected with a generous glow of the pureſt godlineſs upon reading them with care and attention.—The frequency of ſuch biſhops in Europe is devoutly to be wiſhed! What avail good ſenſe, taſte, learning, without Chriſtian ſimplicity—and a heart above the world, its flatteries or its frowns!—Contemplate—ſtudy the character of the prelate of Carthage, and you will learn what Chriſtian biſhops once were, and what they ſtill ought to be.

5. But the chief point of view, in which the contraſt between theſe two perſons is moſt ſtriking, is in the conſequences and fruits of their labours and their writings. Before Cyprian's time Africa appears to have been in no very flouriſhing ſtate with reſpect to Chriſtianity. Within twelve years he was the inſtrument of moſt material ſervice in recovering many apoſtates, in reforming diſcipline, and in reviving the eſſence of

of godlineſs. His example was moſt powerful and effectual among them for ages. The honours paid to his memory demonſtrate this: Moreover it is certain, that his dioceſe, once the ſcene of Punic greatneſs, continued, long after, one of the moſt precious gardens of Chriſtianity, as I ſhall have abundant occaſion to ſhew in the courſe of this hiſtory,—if I ſhould be permitted to continue it.—But the miſchiefs of Origen's taſte and ſpirit in religion were inexpreſſible.—Talents and learning are coveted by mankind; he, however, who poſſeſſes much of them, has the more abundant need to learn humility and divine caution. For, if he do not evidently benefit mankind by them, he is in danger of doing much miſchief.—No man, not altogether unſound and hypocritical, ever injured the Church of Chriſt more than Origen did. From the fanciful mode of allegory, introduced by him and uncontrouled by Scriptural rule and order, aroſe a vitiated method of commenting on the ſacred pages; which has been ſucceeded by the contrary extreme—namely, a contempt of types and figures altogether: and, in a ſimilar way, his fanciful ideas of LETTER and SPIRIT tended to remove from men's minds all juſt conceptions of genuine ſpirituality.—A thick miſt for ages pervaded the Chriſtian world, ſupported and ſtrengthened by his abſurd allegorical manner of interpretation. The learned alone were conſidered as guides implicitly to be followed; and the vulgar,—when the literal ſenſe was hiſſed off the ſtage,—had nothing to do but to follow their authority wherever it might conduct them.—It was not till the days of Luther and Melancthon, that this evil was fairly and ſucceſsfully oppoſed.

If I have carried the parallel to a greater length than the juſt laws of hiſtory allow, the importance

of the caſe is my apology. Let the whole be attentively weighed by the ſerious reader, in connection with two paſſages of St. Paul: the firſt of which is,—"I am jealous over you with a godly jealouſy, leſt your minds be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt;"—and the ſecond—"Hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?"

CHAP. XVI.

OTHER PARTICULARS OF VALERIAN'S PERSECUTION.

IT has been already mentioned, that Cyprian heard of the death of Sixtus, biſhop of Rome, a little before his own martyrdom. In purſuance of the cruel orders of Valerian, for carrying on the perſecution, that prelate had been ſeized with ſome of his clergy. While they were carrying him to execution, Laurentius, his chief deacon, followed him weeping, and ſaid, "Whither goeſt thou, Father, without thy ſon?" Sextus ſaid, "You ſhall follow me in three days." We may ſuppoſe him to have been poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of prophecy in ſaying this, becauſe we are certain that miraculous gifts were as yet by no means extinct in the Church: But, perhaps, the declaration was not out of the reach of common ſagacity from the circumſtances of affairs.

After Sixtus's death *, the Prefect of Rome, moved by an idle report of the immenſe riches of the Roman Church, ſent for Laurentius, and ordered him to deliver them up. Laurentius replied, "Give me a little time to ſet every thing in order, and to take an account of each particular." The Prefect granted him three days time. In that ſpace Laurentius collected all the poor who were ſupported by the Roman Church, and going

* Aug. Vol. 9, p. 52.—See Fleury, B. 7.

going to the Prefect, ſaid, "Come, behold the riches of our God; you ſhall ſee a large court full of golden veſſels." The Prefect followed him, but, ſeeing all the poor people, he turned to Laurentius with looks full of anger. "What are you diſpleaſed at?" ſaid the martyr;—"The gold, you ſo eagerly deſire, is but a vile metal taken out of the earth, and ſerves as an incitement to all ſorts of crimes: The true gold is that Light whoſe diſciples theſe poor men are. The miſery of their bodies is an advantage to their ſouls: Sin is the real diſeaſe of mankind: The great ones of the earth are the truly poor and contemptible. Theſe are the treaſures which I promiſed you; to which I will add precious ſtones.—Behold theſe virgins and widows, they are the Church's crown; make uſe of theſe riches for the advantage of Rome, of the emperor, and of yourſelf."

Doubtleſs, if the Prefect's mind had been at all diſpoſed to receive an inſtructive leſſon, he would have met with one here. The liberality of Chriſtians in maintaining a great number of objects, and in looking for no recompenſe but that which ſhall take place at the reſurrection of the juſt, while they patiently bore affliction, and humbly reſted on an unſeen Saviour, was perfectly agreeable to the mind of HIM, who bids his diſciples, in a well-known parable, to relieve thoſe, who cannot recompenſe them*. How glorious was this ſcene! at a time when the reſt of the world were tearing one another in pieces, and when philoſophers made not the ſlighteſt attempts to alleviate the miſeries of their fellow-creatures!—But, as the perſecutors would not hear the doctrines explained, ſo neither would they ſee the precepts exemplified with patience. "Do ye mock me?" cries the Prefect; "I know,

* Luke xiv. 12—15.

"I know, ye value yourſelves for contemning death, and therefore ye ſhall not die at once." Then he cauſed Laurentius to be ſtripped, extended, and faſtened to a gridiron, and, in that manner, to be broiled to death by a ſlow fire. When he had continued a conſiderable time with one ſide to the fire, he ſaid to the Prefect, "Let me be turned, I am ſufficiently broiled on one ſide." And when they had turned him, he looked up to heaven and prayed for the converſion of Rome; and then gave up the ghoſt!

I give this ſtory at ſome length, becauſe it has ſufficient marks of credibility, and is ſupported by the evidence of Auguſtine.—I am not diſpoſed to follow Fleury in various other narratives. In ſubjects of martyrology this author ſeems directly oppoſite to our countryman Gibbon. Whatever judgment theſe hiſtorians poſſeſſed, remained, in this matter, equally unexerciſed by both. Indiſcriminate incredulity is as blind as indiſcriminate belief.—I may not always ſucceed, but I certainly endeavour to ſeparate truth from fiction, and neither to impoſe on my readers or on myſelf.

At Cæſarea in Cappadocia, a child named Cyril, ſhewed uncommon fortitude. He called on the name of Jeſus Chriſt continually, nor could threats or blows prevent him from openly avowing Chriſtianity. —Several children of the ſame age perſecuted him; and his own father, with the applauſes of many perſons for his zeal in the ſupport of paganiſm, drove him out of his houſe. The judge ordered him to be brought before him, and ſaid, "My child, I will pardon your faults; and your father ſhall receive you again: It is in your power to enjoy your father's eſtate, provided you are wiſe, and take care of your own intereſt." "I rejoice to bear your reproaches," replied the child;—"God will re-

ceive me: I am not ſorry that I am expelled out of our houſe: I ſhall have a better manſion: I fear not death, becauſe it will introduce me into a better life." Divine Grace having enabled him to witneſs this good confeſſion, he was ordered to be bound and led, as it were, to execution. The judge had given ſecret orders to bring him back again, hoping that the ſight of the fire might overcome his reſolution. Cyril remained inflexible. The humanity of the judge induced him ſtill to continue his remonſtrances. "Your fire and your ſword," ſays the young martyr, "are inſignificant. I go to a better houſe; I go to more excellent riches: Diſpatch me preſently, that I may enjoy them." The ſpectators wept through compaſſion. "Ye ſhould rather rejoice," ſays he, "in conducting me to puniſhment. Ye know not what a city I am going to inhabit, nor what is my hope." Thus he went to his death, and was the admiration of the whole city.—Such an example illuſtrates well that Scripture,—"Out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings thou haſt ordained ſtrength."

There were at Antioch a preſbyter and a layman, the former named Sapricius, the latter Nicephorus, who through ſome miſunderſtanding, after a remarkable intimacy, became ſo completely eſtranged, that they would not even ſalute each other in the ſtreet. Nicephorus after a time relented, begged forgiveneſs of his fault, and took repeated meaſures to procure reconciliation,—but in vain. He even ran to the houſe of Sapricius, and throwing himſelf at his feet, entreated his forgiveneſs for the Lord's ſake:—the preſbyter continued obſtinate.

In this ſituation of things the perſecution of Valerian reached them ſuddenly. Sapricius was carried

carried before the governor, and ordered to ſacrifice in obedience to the edicts of the emperors. "We Chriſtians," replied Sapricius, "acknowledge for our King Jeſus Chriſt, who is the true God, and the Creator of heaven and earth.—Periſh idols, which can do neither good nor harm!" The Prefect tormented him a long time, and then commanded that he ſhould be beheaded. Nicephorus, hearing of this, runs up to him, as he is led to execution, and renews, in vain the ſame ſupplications. The executioners deride his humility as perfect folly. But he perſeveres, and attends Sapricius to the place of execution. There he ſays further, It is written, "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you."—But, not even the mention of the word of God itſelf, ſo ſuitable to Sapricius's own circumſtances, could affect his obſtinate and unforgiving temper.

Sapricius, however, ſuddenly forſaken of God, recants, and promiſes to ſacrifice. Nicephorus, amazed, exhorts him to the contrary, but in vain. He, then, ſays to the executioners, "I believe in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath renounced." The officers return to give an account to the governor, who ordered Nicephorus to be beheaded*.

The account ends here:—but if Sapricius lived to repent, as I hope he did, he might learn what a dangerous thing it is for a miſerable mortal, whoſe ſufficiency and perſeverance reſt entirely on Divine Grace, to deſpiſe, condemn, or exult over his brother. The LAST became the FIRST:—and God ſhewed his people wonderfully by this caſe, that he will ſupport them in their ſufferings for his name; but that, at the ſame time, he would have them to be humble, meek, and forgiving

This

* Fleury, Book 7. Acta ſincera 253, 254.

This is the firſt inſtance I have ſeen of a man attempting to ſuffer for Chriſt on PHILOSOPHICAL grounds;—and it failed: Self-ſufficiency and pure Chriſtianity are, in their nature, diſtinct and oppoſite:—Let no man attempt to unite or mix together ſuch heterogeneous and jarring principles.

It appears, that Chriſtian fortitude is a very different thing from the ſteady pride of a philoſopher, or the ſullen patience of an Indian; and, that it cannot even ſubſiſt in the abſence of Chriſtian meekneſs and charity.—Philoſophers and ſavages without the leaſt ſupernatural help, have, frequently, maintained a hardy and unconquerable ſpirit amidſt the higheſt gratifications of malice and ferocity. But, the event of this ſtory may teach the infidel,—that he has no reaſon to exult in ſuch inſtances,—that the ſpirit of ſuffering for Chriſt is, in its kind, a quite different thing,—that it is above mere human nature,—that it is wrought in the heart by divine grace,—and, that it cannot ſubſiſt if the Spirit of God be provoked to leave the ſufferer.

Dionyſius of Alexandria, whom divine providence had ſo remarkably preſerved in the Decian perſecution, lived to ſuffer much alſo in this;—but not to death. Euſebius has preſerved ſome extracts of his writings, which not only prove this fact beyond diſpute, but alſo throw conſiderable light on the effects of Valerian's perſecution in Egypt*.

This biſhop, with his preſbyter Maximus, three deacons, and a Roman Chriſtian was brought before Æmilian the Prefect, and was ordered to recant: At the ſame time, it was obſerved, that his doing ſo might have a good effect on others.—He anſwered, "We ought to obey God rather than man; I worſhip God who alone ought to be worſhipped."

* Book 7. Chap. x.

ſhipped." "Hear the clemency of the emperor.' ſays Æmilian: "You are all pardoned, provided you return to a natural duty:—Adore the gods who guard the empire, and forſake thoſe things which are contrary to nature." Dionyſius anſwered, "All men do not worſhip the ſame gods, but men worſhip variouſly according to their ſentiments. But WE worſhip the ONE GOD, the maker of all things, who gave the empire to the moſt clement emperors Valerian and Gallienus; and to him we pour out inceſſant prayers for their proſperous adminiſtration." "What can be the meaning," ſays Æmilian, "why ye may not ſtill adore that God of your's,—on ſuppoſition that he is a God—in conjunction with our gods?" Dionyſius anſwered,—"We worſhip no other God."

From this remarkable queſtion of the Prefect, it is evident, that men might have been tolerated in the worſhip of Jeſus, if they had allowed idolaters alſo to be right in the main, by aſſociating idols with the true God. The firmneſs of Chriſtians, in this reſpect, provoked their enemies. The diſlike, at this day, of the pure Goſpel of Chriſt, ariſes from a ſimilar cauſe: Men are condemned as bigots, becauſe they cannot allow the world at large to be right in eyes of God.

Æmilian baniſhed them all to a village near the deſert, called Cephro. And thither Dionyſius, though ſickly, was conſtrained to depart immediately. "And truly," ſays Dionyſius, "we are not abſent from the Church; for I ſtill gather ſuch as are in the city as if I were preſent:—abſent indeed in body, but preſent in ſpirit. And there continued with us, in Cephro, a great congregation, partly of the brethren which followed us from Alexandria, and partly of them which came from Egypt. And there God opened a door to me to

ſpeak

ſpeak his word. Yet, at the beginning, we ſuffered perſecution and were ſtoned; but, at length, not a few of the pagans forſook their idols and were converted. For, here, we had an opportunity to preach the word of God to a people who had never heard it before. And God, that brought us among them, removed us to another place, after our miniſtry was there completed. As ſoon as I heard that Æmilian had ordered us to depart from Cephro, I undertook my journey cheerfully, though I did not know whither we were to go; but, upon being informed that Colluthio was the place, I felt much diſtreſs; becauſe it was reported to be a ſituation deſtitute of all the comforts of ſociety, expoſed to the tumults of travellers and infeſted by thieves. My companions well remember the effect this had on my mind. I proclaim my own ſhame: At firſt I grieved immoderately. It was a conſolation, however, that it was nigh to a city. I was in hopes from the nearneſs of the city, that we might enjoy the company of dear brethren; and that particular aſſemblies for divine worſhip might be eſtabliſhed in the ſuburbs, which indeed came to paſs."

Amidſt this ſcantineſs of information conveyed in no great perſpicuity or beauty of ſtyle, as it appears, however, that the Lord was with Dionyſius and cauſed his ſufferings to tend to the furtherance of the Goſpel.—His confeſſion of his own heavineſs of mind does honour to his ingenuouſneſs: and the ſtrength of Chriſt was made perfect in his weakneſs.

In another epiſtle, he gives a brief account of the afflictions of others:—It deſerves to be tranſcribed as a monument of the greatneſs and the violence of Valerian's perſecution.

"It

" It may ſeem ſuperfluous to recite the names of our people; for they were many, and to me unknown. Take this however for certain: There were men and women, young men and old men, virgins and old women, ſoldiers and vulgar perſons, of all ſorts and ages. Some, after ſtripes and fire, were crowned victors.—Some, immediately by the ſword, and others after a ſhort but ſevere torture, became acceptable ſacrifices to the Lord. You all heard how I, and Caius, and Fauſtus, and Peter, and Paul, when we were led bound by the centurion and his ſoldiers, were ſeized by certain men of Mareota, and drawn away by violence. I, and Caius, and Peter, were deprived of the other brethren, and were confined in a dreary part of Lybia, diſtant three days journey from Parætonium, Afterwards he ſays, " There hid themſelves in the city, ſome good men who viſited the brethren ſecretly: Among theſe, Maximus, Dioſcorus, Demetrius, and Lucius were miniſters. Two others of greater note, Fauſtinus and Aquila, now wander, I know not where, in Egypt. All the deacons died of diſeaſes, except Fauſtinus, Euſebius, and Chæremon. God inſtructed Euſebius and ſtrengthened him, from the beginning, to miniſter diligently to the confeſſors in priſon, and to bury the bodies of the holy martyrs: —which, however, he could not do without great danger. The preſident, to this day, ceaſes not cruelly to kill ſome inſtantly; and to tear in pieces others by torments, or to conſume them more ſlowly by bonds and impriſonments: He forbids any perſons to come nigh them; and inquires daily whether his orders be obeyed.—Yet our God ſtill refreſhes the afflicted with conſolation and with the attendance of the brethren."

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This Euſebius,—here honourably mentioned,—was ſome time after biſhop of Laodicea in Syria; and Maximus the preſbyter was ſucceſſor to Dionyſius in Alexandria. Fauſtus was reſerved to the days of Dioclefian—again to ſuffer,—even to blood.

At Cæſarea in Paleſtine, Priſcus, Malcus, and Alexander, were devoured by wild beaſts. Theſe perſons led an obſcure life in the country; but hearing of the multitude of executions, they blamed themſelves for their ſloth; they came to Cæſarea; went to the judge, and obtained the object of their ambition.—Our divine Maſter, both by precept and example, condemns ſuch forward zeal;—which, however, in theſe inſtances we truſt, was not without a real love of his name. —We have ſeen, abundantly, how much like a true diſciple of Chriſt, Cyprian of Carthage conducted himſelf in theſe reſpects.—In this ſame city, there likewiſe ſuffered a woman, who was ſaid to be inclined to the hereſy of Marcion; but, probably, there was not much ground for the report.

After three years employed in perſecution, Valerian was taken priſoner by Sapor king of Perſia, who detained him the reſt of his life, and made uſe of his neck when he mounted his horſe; and at length commanded him to be flayed and ſalted. This event belongs to ſecular rather than Church-hiſtory: But as it is perfectly well atteſted, and as no one that I know of, except Mr. Gibbon, ever affected to diſbelieve the fact, it cannot but ſtrike the mind of any one who fears God.—Valerian had known and reſpected the Chriſtians: His perſecution muſt have been a ſin againſt the light; and it is common with divine providence to puniſh ſuch daring offences in a very exemplary manner.

The

After Valerian's captivity the Church was reſtored to reſt. About the year two hundred and ſixty-two, Gallienus his ſon and ſucceſſor proved a ſincere friend to the Chriſtians, though, in other reſpects, no reputable emperor. By edicts he ſtopped the perſecution; and he had the condeſcenſion to give the biſhops his letters of licence to return to their paſtoral charges. One of theſe letters, as preſerved by Euſebius, runs thus:—"The emperor Cæſar—Gallienus to Dionyſius,—the biſhop of Alexandria then in exile,—to Pinna and Demetrius, with the reſt of the biſhops. The benefit of our favour we command to be publiſhed through the world: and I have, therefore, ordered every one to withdraw from ſuch places as were devoted to religious uſes; ſo that you may make uſe of the authority of my edict againſt any moleſtation; for I have, ſome time ſince, granted you my protection:—wherefore Cyrenius the governor of the province will obſerve the reſcript which I have ſent." He directed alſo another edict to certain biſhops, by which he reſtored to them the places in which they buried their dead. A. D. 262.

Were it needful at this day to refute the raſh calumnies of Tacitus and of others againſt the Chriſtians, one might appeal to theſe two edicts of Gallienus. It is impoſſible that either of them could have taken place, if it had not been undeniable that the Chriſtians, even to the time beyond the middle of the third century, were men of probity and worthy of the protection of goverment. As it is impoſſible to avoid this concluſion, the deepeſt ſtain reſts on the characters of Trajan, Decius, and Valerian, men highly reſpected in ſecular hiſtory, for treating their ſubjects of the beſt characters with ſavage ferocity.—But God, who has the hearts of all men in his hand, provided for his

ſervants

ſervants a protector in Gallienus, after an unexampled courſe of heavy perſecution during the three laſt reigns.—Gallienus himſelf ſeems to have been more like a modern than an ancient ſovereign;—a man of taſte, indolence, and philoſophy;—diſpoſed to cheriſh every thing that looked like knowledge and liberty of thinking;—by no means ſo kind and generous in his conſtant practice as his profeſſion might ſeem to promiſe;—the ſlave of his paſſions, and led away by every ſudden feeling that ſeized his imagination. The Chriſtians appear to have been conſidered by him as a ſect of new philoſophers; and, as he judged it improper to perſecute philoſophers of any ſort, they found a complete toleration under a prince, whoſe conſcience ſeems to have ſet him free from the influence of all religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

FROM THE REIGN OF GALLIENUS TO THE END OF THE CENTURY.

THE general hiſtory of the Church of Chriſt, for the remaining forty years of this century, affords no great quantity of materials. After having collected them into this chapter in order, it may be proper to reſerve, to a diſtinct conſideration, the lives of ſome particular perſons, and other miſcellaneous matters, which belong not to the thread of the narrative.

We now behold a NEW ſcene:—Chriſtians legally tolerated under a pagan government for forty years!—The example of Gallienus was followed by the ſucceſſive emperors to the end of the century:—It was violated only in one inſtance;—the effect of which was preſently diſſipated by the hand of providence.—This new ſcene did not prove favourable to the growth of grace and holineſs. In no period ſince the Apoſtles was there ever ſo great a general decay as in this;—not even in particular inſtances, can we diſcover, during the ſame interval, much of any very lively Chriſtianity.

Thoſe, however, are not well informed in the nature of the religion of Jeſus, who ſuppoſe, that, literally, there was no perſecution all this time:—True Chriſtians are never without ſome ſhare of it; nor is it in the power of the beſt and the mildeſt governments to protect men of godlineſs

from the malice of the world in all caſes. We ſaw an example of this when Commodus was emperor:—Obſerve another under the government of Gallienus.—At Cæſarea in Paleſtine, there was a ſoldier—of bravery,—of noble family,—and of great opulence; who, upon a vacancy, was called to the office of centurion. His name was Marinus.—But, another ſoldier came before the tribunal, and urged,—that, by the laws, Marinus was incapacitated, becauſe he was a Chriſtian and did not do ſacrifice to the emperors;—and that he himſelf, as next in rank, ought to be preferred.—Achæus the governor aſked Marinus what was his religion;—upon which he confeſſed himſelf a Chriſtian. The governor gave him the ſpace of three hours for deliberation.—Immediately Theotecnes, biſhop of Cæſarea, called Marinus from the tribunal,—took him by the hand,—led him to the Church,—ſhewed him the ſword that hung by his ſide and a New Teſtament which he pulled out of his pocket;—and he then bid him chooſe which of the two he liked beſt.—Marinus ſtretched out his hand; and took up the Holy Scriptures.—"Hold faſt then," ſaid Theotecnes; "Cleave to God: and HIM whom you have choſen, you ſhall enjoy: you ſhall be ſtrengthened by HIM, and ſhall depart in peace."—After the expiration of the three hours, upon the crier's ſummons, he appeared at the bar, manfully confeſſed the faith of Chriſt, heard the ſentence of condemnation, and was beheaded.

Without more acquaintance with the particular* inſtitutes of Roman law on this ſubject, it is not eaſy to reconcile this proceeding with the edict of Gallienus.—Perhaps the act of Achæus was illegal—or, perhaps ſome particular MILITARY

* Euſeb. Book 7, Chap. 14.

TARY law might be in force againſt the martyr. The fact, however, reſts on the beſt authority; and the profeſſion of arms appears to have had ſtill among them, ſince the days of Cornelius, thoſe who loved Jeſus Chriſt.

The greateſt luminary in the Church at this time was Dionyſius of Alexandria. His works are loſt: A few extracts of them preſerved by Euſebius have, already, been given;—and ſome few more may be here introduced.—He ſpeaks of the Sabellian hereſy, which had now made its appearance,—as follows,

"As* many brethren have ſent their books and diſputations in writing to me concerning the impious doctrine lately propagated at Pentapolis in Ptolemais, which contain many blaſphemies againſt the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and alſo much infidelity reſpecting his only-begotten Son, the FIRST BEGOTTEN OF EVERY CREATURE, and THE WORD INCARNATE; and, laſtly, a deal of ſenſeleſs ignorance relative to the Holy Ghoſt;—ſome of them I have tranſcribed, and ſent the copies to you."

This is the firſt account in exiſtence of the origin of Sabellianiſm;—a plauſible corruption, no doubt,—perhaps the moſt ſo of all thoſe which oppoſe the myſtery of the Trinity. But, like all the reſt, it fails for want of Scripture-evidence, and ſhews itſelf to be only a weak attempt to lower and ſubmit to human reaſon that, which was never meant to be amenable to its tribunal. The careful diſtinctions of Dionyſius, in recounting the perſons of the Trinity, were very proper in ſpeaking of a hereſy which confounds the perſons, and leaves them nothing of thoſe diſtinct characters, on which

* Book 7, Chap. 5.

which the nature of the doctrines of the Goſpel ſo much depends.

This biſhop alſo delivers his ſentiments in the controverſy concerning the re-baptizing of heretics: He is againſt that practice; and, at the ſame time, he condemns with great ſeverity the Novatian ſchiſm;—becauſe, ſays he, "it charges the moſt loving and merciful God with unmercifulneſs*." Yet, on the ſubject of baptiſm, he confeſſes himſelf to have been, for ſome time at leaſt, ſtaggered in opinion by a remarkable caſe.—"When the brethren were gathered together, and when there was preſent one who had been, before my time, an antient miniſter of the clergy, a certain perſon, allowed to be ſound in the faith,—upon ſeeing our form and manner of baptiſm, and hearing the interrogatories and reſponſes, came to me weeping and wailing, falling proſtrate at my feet and proteſting—that the baptiſm which he had received was heretical,—could not be the true baptiſm,—and, that it had no agreement with that which was in uſe among us, but, on the contrary, was full of impiety and blaſphemy. He owned, —that the diſtreſs of his conſcience was extreme, —that he durſt not preſume to lift up his eyes to God, becauſe he had been baptized with profane words and rites. He begged therefore to be re-baptized; with which requeſt I durſt not comply; but I told him that frequent communion, many times adminiſtered, would ſuffice. This man had heard thankſgiving ſounded in the Church, and had ſung to it, "Amen;" he had been preſent at the Lord's table; had ſtretched forth his hand to receive the holy food; had actually communicated; and, indeed of a long time, had been partaker of the body and blood of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,—therefore, I durſt not re-babtize him, but bade him

* Book 7. Chap. 7.

him be of good cheer and of a ſure faith, and boldly approach to the communion of ſaints.—Notwithſtanding all this, the man mourns continually; and his horror keeps him from the Lord's table; and he ſcarce, with much intreaty, can join in the prayers of the Church."

We have no farther account of this matter: but, ſurely there is good reaſon to believe that the God of Grace, would in due time, relieve ſuch a character.

The deteſtation of hereſy, and the marked diſtinction of true Chriſtianity were, in ſome circumſtances, carried into an extreme, during this century: diſcipline, however, was not neglected in the Church; but, as I have already obſerved, was carried ſometimes to exceſs—even to ſuperſtition. —Satan's temptations are ever ready to drive into deſpair truly penitent and contrite ſpirits. This ſtory, as it reſpects all the parties concerned, breathes throughout a ſpirit the very oppoſite to the licentious boldneſs of our own times, and marks the peculiar character of the piety of the age of Dionyſius;—which was ſincere, but mixt with ſuperſtition*.

The celebration of the feaſt of Eaſter and of other holy days forms the ſubject of another of his epiſtles.

Dionyſius, now returned from exile to Alexandria, found it involved in the horrors of a civil war. On the feaſt of Eaſter, as if he was ſtill in baniſhment, he wrote to his people, who were in another part of the city, with which he could have no perſonal intercourſe. In a letter to Hierax, an Egyptian biſhop at ſome diſtance, he ſays, "It is not to be wondered at, that it is difficult for me to converſe by epiſtles with thoſe at a diſtance, when

* Euſeb. Book 7, Chap. 8.—See Greek.

when I find myſelf here precluded from having any intercourſe with my moſt intimate friends and tendereſt connexions.—Even with THEM I have no intercourſe but by writing, though they be citizens of the ſame Church; and I find it very difficult to procure a ſafe conveyance of any letters which I would ſend to them. A man may more eaſily travel from the eaſt to the weſt than from Alexandria to Alexandria. The middle road of this city is more impaſſable than that vaſt wilderneſs which the Iſraelites wandered through in two generations."—He goes on to deſcribe the miſeries of war and bloodſhed, of plagues and diſeaſes, which, at that time, deſolated Alexandria;—and he complains that the people ſtill repented not of their ſins.

To the brethren, he ſays, "Now every thing is full of lamentation;—every one does nothing but mourn and howl through the city, becauſe of the multitude of corpſes and the daily deaths. —Many of our brethren, through their great love and brotherly affection, ſpared not themſelves, but clave one to another, and attended upon the ſick moſt diligently; and, in doing ſo, they brought the ſorrows of others upon themſelves; they caught the infection and loſt their own lives. In this manner the beſt of our brethren departed this life;—of whom ſome were preſbyters, and ſome deacons,—highly reverenced by the common people." He then goes on to obſerve with what affectionate care the Chriſtians attended the funerals of their friends, while the pagans, in the ſame city, through fear of receiving the contagion, deſerted and neglected theirs. Undoubtedly he deſcribes here a ſtrong picture of the benevolence of Chriſtians, and of the ſelfiſhneſs of other men. —It belongs to true Chriſtianity to produce ſuch fruits, though, in ſome reſpects, they might be carried

carried farther than real Chriſtian prudence would vindicate.—But every lover of Jeſus is refreſhed to find the certain marks of HIS Spirit and HIS preſence among his people.

An Egyptian biſhop, named Nepos, taught that the Millennium was to commence AFTER the reſurrection; and deſcribed the happineſs of ſaints as much conſiſting in corporeal enjoyments. Dionyſius thought the notion dangerous;—yet, his candour inclined him to entertain a good opinion of Nepos on the whole. He commends his faith, his diligence, his ſkill in the Holy Scriptures; and, particularly, his agreeable pſalmody, with which many of the brethren were delighted: But, as he thought his opinions not ſafe, he oppoſed them. When he was at Arſenoita, he ſpent three days with the brethren who had been infected with the notions of Nepos, and explained the ſubject. He ſpeaks with much commendation of the candour and docility of the people, particularly of Coracion their leader, who owned himſelf brought over to the ſentiments of Dionyſius.—The authority of Dionyſius ſeems to have quaſhed the opinions of Nepos in the bud.—The conſequence of an injudicious and unſcriptural view of the Millennium, thus rejected and refuted by a biſhop of candour, judgment, and authority, was,—that the doctrine itſelf continued, for ages, both much out of ſight and out of repute.—The learned reader need not be told, with how much clearer light it has been revived and confirmed in our days.

Dionyſius finding how much uſe had been made of the Revelation of St. John in ſupporting the doctrine of the Millennium, gives his thoughts on that ſublime and wonderful book: With much

modeſty he confeſſes, that though he reverenced its contents, he did not underſtand their ſcope.

The ſubtilty and the reſtleſs ſpirit of thoſe, who corrupt the doctrine of the Trinity, have ever had this advantage,—that while they, without fear or ſcruple, can ſay what they pleaſe, its defenders are reduced to the neceſſity either of leaving the field to them entirely, or of expoſing themſelves to the ſpecious charge of maintaining ſome human invention, or even hereſy,—contrary to that which they are oppoſing. This laſt was the caſe of Dionyſius in his attack on Sabellianiſm. The ſcantineſs of our ideas, and the extreme difficulty of cloathing, with proper expreſſions, thoſe very inadequate ones which we have on a ſubject ſo profound, naturally lay us open to ſuch imputation, from which, however, faithful zeal will never be diſpoſed to ſhrink on a proper occaſion;—I mean, the faithful zeal of thoſe, who ſee through the deſigns of heretics and who prefer truth, though veiled in unavoidable myſtery, to ſpecious error diſguiſed in an affected garb of ſimplicity.—Sabellius had taken pains to confound the perſons of the Father and the Son. Dionyſius ſhewed, by an unequivocal teſtimony, that the Father was not the ſame as the Son, nor the Son the ſame as the Father.—Dionyſius, biſhop of Rome, being informed of theſe things, aſſembled a council, in which certain expreſſions attributed to his name-ſake of Alexandria were diſapproved; and he wrote to him with the view of furniſhing an opportunity for explanation.

The biſhop of Alexandria with great clearneſs, candour, and moderation, explained himſelf at large in a work, which he entitled a Refutation and Apology*. In the ſmall remains of this work

* Anth. de Sent.—See Fleury, L. iv. Book 7.

work it appears, that he held the conſubſtantiality of the Son with the Father: He deſcribes the Trinity in Unity, and ſteers equally clear of the rock of Sabellianiſm, which confounds the perſons, and that of Arianiſm, which divides the ſubſtance. His teſtimony, therefore, may be added to that of the primitive fathers all along on this ſubject.

"The Father," ſays he, "cannot be ſeparated from the Son, as he is the Father; for THAT NAME, at the ſame time, eſtabliſhes the RELATION. Neither can the Son be ſeparated from the Father; for the word Father implies the union: moreover, the Spirit is united with the Father and the Son, becauſe IT cannot exiſt ſeparate either from HIM who ſends it, or from HIM who brings it. Thus we underſtand the indiviſible Unity without any diminution." This account was ſatisfactory to the whole Church; and was allowed to contain the ſenſe of Chriſtians on the doctrine.

In the year two hundred and ſixty-four the A. D. 264. hereſy of Paul of Samoſata began to excite the general attention of Chriſtians; and, about the ſame time, a degeneracy both in principle and practice, hitherto very uncommon within the pale of Chriſtianity, attracted the particular notice of all who wiſhed well to the ſouls of men. Paul was the biſhop of Antioch. It gives one no very high idea of the ſtate of eccleſiaſtical diſcipline in that renowned Church, that ſuch a man ſhould ever have been placed at its head: — But it is no new thing for even ſincere Chriſtians to be dazzled with the parts and eloquence of corrupt men. The ideas of this man ſeem to have been perfectly ſecular. Zenobia of Palmyra, who, at that time ſtiled herſelf Queen of the Eaſt, and reigned over a large part of the empire which had been

been torn from the indolent hands of Gallienus, deſired his inſtructions in Chriſtianity*. It does not appear that her motives had any thing in them beyond philoſophical curioſity. The maſter and the ſcholar were well ſuited to each other; and Paul taught her his own conceptions of Jeſus Chriſt, —namely, that HE was, by nature, a common man like others. The irregulaties of his life and the heterodoxy of his doctrine could no longer be endured. There is, in fact, more neceſſary connexion between principle and practice than the world is ready to believe;—for pure practical holineſs can only be the effect of Chriſtian truth.— The biſhops met at Antioch to conſider his caſe: Among theſe, were, particularly, Firmilian of Cæſarea in Cappadocia, Gregory† Thaumaturgus, and Athenodorus, who were brethren and biſhops in Pontus; and Theotecnes of Cæſarea in Paleſtine. A number of miniſters and deacons beſides met together on the occaſion. In ſeveral ſeſſions the caſe of Paul was argued. Firmilian ſeems to have preſided.—Paul was induced to recant, and gave ſuch appearances of ſincerity that Firmilian and the council believed him. The matter ſlept, therefore, for the preſent, and Paul continued in his biſhopric.

A. D. 264. It was in the ſame year two hundred and ſixty-four, the twelfth of Gallienus, that Dionyſius of Alexandria died, after having held the See ſeventeen years. He had been invited to the council; but pleaded in excuſe his great age and infirmities: he, however, ſent a letter to the council containing his advice, and addreſſed the Church of Antioch without taking any notice of her biſhop. This

* Athan. tom. 11, page 857. Fleury, Euſeb. vii. Chap. 6, &c.

† See his Life in Chap. below.

This was the laſt ſervice of this great and good man to the Church of Chriſt, after having gone through a variety of hardſhips, and diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his ſteady piety in the cauſe of religion. His having been a pupil of Origen in his younger years was no great advantage to his theological knowledge: It is to be regretted that our materials concerning him are ſo defective; but, the few fragments, which remain, afford the ſtrongeſt marks of unqueſtionable good ſenſe and moderation, as well as of genuine piety.

Gallienus having reigned fifteen years, Claudius ſucceeded; and, after a reign of two years, in which he continued the protector of Chriſtians, Aurelian became emperor. Under him a ſecond council was convened concerning Paul of Samoſata. He diſſembled egregiouſly; nevertheleſs, the intolerable corruption both of his doctrine and of his morals was proved in a ſatisfactory manner; inſomuch, that the friends of Chriſt felt themſelves called upon to ſhew openly that all regard to the perſon and precepts of their divine Maſter was not loſt in the Chriſtian world*.— Seventy biſhops appeared at the ſynod, among whom Theotecnes of Cæſarea in Paleſtine was ſtill one of the principal. They waited ſome time for the arrival of Firmilian of Cappadocia, who had been invited, and was on his way, notwithſtanding his great age; but he died at Tarſus in the year two hundred and ſixty-nine. He had A. D. been one of the greateſt luminaries of the day, 269 and ſo had Gregory Thaumaturgus of Pontus, who alſo died in the interval between the firſt and ſecond council. The loſs of theſe great men was, no doubt, the more ſeverely felt on this occaſion, becauſe it was not in the power of every one, who really

* Athan. de Syn. Euſeb. 28, &c.

really believed and loved the truth as it is in Jeſus, to confute and expoſe, in a proper manner, the artifices of Paul.

Whoever has ſeen the pains taken at this day, by many perſons of Paul's perſuaſion, to cover their ideas under a cloud of ambiguous expreſſions, and to repreſent themſelves, when attacked, as meaning the ſame thing with real Chriſtians, while, at other times, they take all poſſible pains, and in the moſt open way, to undermine the very fundamental doctrines of the Goſpel, will not be ſurpriſed that Paul,—artful, eloquent, and deceitful as he was,—ſhould be able to give a ſpecious colour to his ideas. But, there was in the council a preſbyter, named Malchion, who added to the ſoundneſs of Chriſtian faith great ſkill in the art of reaſoning: He had been, a long time, governor of the ſchool of humanity at Antioch: and his talents and experience were of great ſervice in this buſineſs:—He ſo preſſed the ambiguous, equivocating Paul, that he compelled him to declare himſelf and to diſcloſe his moſt ſecret meanings. There needed no more to condemn him. All the biſhops agreed to his depoſition and excluſion from the Chriſtian Church.—Marcion's diſputation againſt Paul was preſerved in writing to the time of Euſebius.

No fact in Church-hiſtory is more certain than this;—and the inference is, thence, demonſtratively
A. D. clear,—that Socinianiſm in the year two hundred
269. and ſixty-nine, was not ſuffered to exiſt within the pale of the Chriſtian Church.—I uſe that term, becauſe it is now well underſtood; and becauſe it fairly expreſſes the ideas of Paul. In truth;—no injury was done to the man: He had certainly no more right to Chriſtian preferment than a traitor has to hold an office of truſt under a legal government;

ment; and to oblige him to ſpeak out what he really held, was no more than what juſtice required: Truth and openneſs are eſſential to the character of all teachers: He, who is void of them, deſerves to be without ſcholars or hearers. At the ſame time I cannot but further conclude—that the doctrine, uſually called Trinitarian, was univerſal in the Church in thoſe times:—Dionyſius, Firmilian, Gregory, Theotecnes, ſeventy biſhops, the whole Chriſtian world, were unanimous on this head;—and this unanimity may ſatisfactorily be traced up to the Apoſtles.

Paul being depoſed, and a new biſhop being choſen in his room, an epiſtle was dictated by the council and ſent to Dionyſius of Rome and to Maximus of Alexandria, and alſo diſperſed through the Roman world, in which they explained their own labours in this matter,—the perverſe duplicity of Paul,—and the objections againſt him.—The chief part of this will deſerve to be tranſcribed—from Euſebius—as the moſt authentic account of the whole tranſaction*.

"To Dionyſius and Maximus, and all our fellow biſhops, elders, and deacons throughout the world, and to the whole univerſal Church,—Helenus, Hymenæus, Theophilus, Theotecnes, &c. with all the other biſhops who with us inhabit and preſide over the neighbouring cities and provinces;—together with the preſbyters and deacons and holy Churches of God,—to the beloved brethren in the Lord, ſend greeting:—

For the purpoſe of healing this deadly and poiſonous miſchief, we have called many biſhops from far, as Dionyſius of Alexandria, and Firmilian of Cæſarea in Cappadocia,—men bleſſed in the Lord;—the former of whom, writing hither to Antioch, vouchſafed not ſo much as once to ſalute the author of

* Book 7. Chap. 29.

of the hereſy; for he wrote not ſpecifically to him, but to the whole congregation;—the copy of which we have annexed. Firmilian came twice to Antioch and condemned this novel doctrine.—He wiſhed to have come, the third time, for the ſame purpoſe; but he only reached Tarſus; and, while we were aſſembling, ſending for him, and expecting his coming, he departed this life.—THIS MAN* was formerly indigent: He derived no property from his parents, nor acquired any either by a trade or a profeſſion; yet he is grown exceedingly rich by ſacrilegious practices and by extortions.—He deceived the brethren and impoſed on their eaſineſs: He entangled them in law ſuits: pretended to aſſiſt the injured; took bribes on all ſides, and thus turned godlineſs into gain.—Vain and fond of ſecular dignity, he preferred the name of JUDGE to that of BISHOP: He erected for himſelf a tribunal and lofty throne, after the manner of civil magiſtrates, and not like a diſciple of Chriſt.—He was accuſtomed to walk through the ſtreets, in great ſtate, receiving letters and dictating anſwers with a numerous guard; inſomuch that great ſcandal has accrued to the faith through his pride and haughtineſs. In church-aſſemblies he uſed theatrical artifices to amaze, ſurprize, and procure applauſe from weak people:—ſuch as ſtriking his thigh with his hand, and ſtamping with his feet.—Then, if there were any, who did not applaud him, nor ſhake their handkerchiefs, nor make loud acclamations as is uſual in the theatre,—nor leap up and down as his partizans do,—but behaved with decent and reverent attention as becomes the houſe of God, he reproved—and even reviled ſuch perſons.—He openly inveighed againſt the deceaſed expoſitors of Scripture in the moſt impudent and ſcornful terms;

* Paul of Samoſata.

terms; and magnified himſelf exactly in the manner of ſophiſts and impoſtors. He ſuppreſſed the pſalms made in honour of Jeſus Chriſt, and called them modern compoſitions;—and he directed others to be ſung in the Church in his own commendation,—which very much ſhocked the hearers:—He alſo encouraged ſimilar practices, as far as it was in his power, among the neighbouring biſhops.—He refuſed to acknowledge the Son of God to have come down from heaven; and affirmed poſitively that he was of the EARTH.—Theſe are not our aſſertions, but ſhall be proved by the public records of the ſynod.—Moreover this ſame man kept women in his houſe under the pretence of their being poor: His prieſts and deacons did the ſame; but he tolerated and concealed this and many other of their crimes, in order that they might remain in a ſtate of dependence; and, that ſtanding in fear on their own account, they might not dare to bring accuſations againſt him for his wicked actions. He alſo frequently gave them money;—and in that way, he engaged covetous and worldly diſpoſitions very ſtrongly in his intereſt.—We are perſuaded, brethren, that a biſhop and all his clergy are bound to give the people an example of all good works; and we are not ignorant, how many, by the dangerous and evil cuſtom of introducing ſingle and unprotected women into their houſes, have fallen into ſin;—and how many, alſo, are ſubject to ſuſpicion and ſlander on the ſame account. If, therefore, it ſhould be admitted, that he hath committed no actual crime, yet the very ſuſpicion ariſing from ſuch a conduct ought to be guarded againſt, for fear of giving offence or ſetting a bad example to any. For how can HE reprove another, or admoniſh another—not to converſe frequently and privately with a woman,—and to take heed, as it is written, leſt he fall,—HE, who,

who, though he has ſent away one, ſtill keeps two women in his houſe;—both of them handſome and in the flower of their age: Beſides, wherever he goes, he carries them about with him; and at the ſame time indulges himſelf in high living and luxuries. —On account of theſe things all ſighed in ſecret indignation, but trembled at his power, and did not dare to accuſe him.

Doubtleſs he would deſerve ſevere cenſures, even if he were our deareſt friend, and perfectly orthodox in his ſentiments;—but as he has renounced Chriſtian myſteries,—WE have felt ourſelves under the neceſſity of expelling from the Church this contumacious adverſary of God: we have, accordingly, placed in his room Domnus—a perſon adorned with all the gifts required in a biſhop: He is the ſon of Demetrian, of bleſſed memory—the predeceſſor of Paul."

It is faſhionable, at preſent, to deſpiſe all religious councils whatever: and probably, this contempt does not ariſe from an EXTRAORDINARY regard to religion itſelf. For, on all ſubjects, which are eſteemed of moment and of general concern, common ſenſe hath ever dictated to mankind the propriety and advantage of holding councils, by which the wiſdom of THE MANY might be collected, concentrated and directed to beneficial purpoſes. Let the reader reflect, how much this has ever been the caſe in regard to politics, agriculture, commerce, and the fine arts.—Againſt religious councils, however moulded, or however conducted, the torrent of the preſent times, unqueſtionably, runs violent: And the mind of an hiſtorian is ſtrongly tempted to give way to this torrent; for by ſo doing, he much more eaſily acquires a reputation for good ſenſe and diſcernment, than by any exerciſes of learning, induſtry, or reflection, if theſe ſhould lead

lead him to oppoſe opinions, which happen to be prevalent. But it is, alſo, to be remembered, that a temporary reputation, which neither conſiſts with truth, nor with the deliberate judgment of the writer, is of very little value;—and with this ſentiment in view, I venture to affirm, that religious councils ought not to be univerſally deſpiſed and rejected, becauſe ſome of them have been uſeleſs or hurtful.—The council at Jeruſalem* was intrinſically of more value than all the wealth and power of the Roman empire: It was by a council, alſo, that Cyprian was enabled to ſerve the Church ſubſtantially, though in one inſtance he failed: And, again, the council, which dictated the letter concerning Paul of Samoſata, will deſerve, under God, the thanks of the Church of Chriſt to the end of the world. Circumſtanced as Paul was,—ſuperior in artifice, eloquence, and capacity;—ſupported by civil power and uncontrouled in his own dioceſe, nothing ſeemed ſo likely to weaken his influence and encourage the true diſciples of Chriſt as the concurrent teſtimony of the Chriſtian world aſſembled againſt him. And though it may be difficult for the inſincere mildneſs of polite ſcepticiſm to reliſh the blunt tone of the council, there ſeem to me, in their proceedings, evident marks of the fear of God, of Chriſtian gravity, and of conſcientious regard to truth. No doubt, the reports of Paul's actual lewdneſs muſt have been very common in Antioch;—but, for want of ſpecific proof,—the hardeſt thing in the world to be obtained in ſuch caſes,—they check the ſmalleſt diſpoſition to exaggerate: they aſſert no more than what they poſitively knew; and thus they convince poſterity that they were, in no way, under

* See the Acts of the Apoſtles.

under the dominion of intemperate paſſion or reſentment. This is the firſt inſtance of a Chriſtian biſhop having been proved ſo ſhamefully ſecular; —and that, on the moſt authentic evidence;—a grievous fact!—The mind is however conſiderably relieved by obſerving, that there exiſted at the ſame time a becoming zeal for truth and holineſs.

Dionyſius of Rome died, alſo, in this year. His ſucceſſor Felix wrote an epiſtle to Maximus of Alexandria, in which,—probably on account of Paul's hereſy,—he ſpeaks thus:—"We believe that our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt was born of the Virgin Mary: we believe that he himſelf is the eternal God and the Word, and not a mere man, whom God took into himſelf, in ſuch a manner, as that the man ſhould be diſtinct from him: For the Son of God is perfect God; and was alſo made perfect man, by being incarnate of the Virgin *."

By the favour of Zenobia, Paul for the ſpace of two or three years ſupported himſelf in the poſſeſſion of the mother-church of Antioch, and of the epiſcopal houſe, and, of courſe, of ſo much of the revenues as depended not on voluntary contributions of the people. A party he, doubtleſs, had among the people; but the horror, which Socinianiſm, then excited through the Chriſtian world, as well as the flagitiouſneſs of his life, render it impoſſible that he ſhould have had, in general, the hearts of the Chriſtians of Antioch. Zenobia was conquered by the emperor Aurelian, and then a change took place: The Chriſtians complained; and Aurelian, conſidering Rome and Italy as, in all things, a guide to the reſt of the world, ordered,—that the controverſy ſhould be decided according to the ſentiments of their biſhops.

Of

* Conc. Eph.—See Fleury, Book 8, Chap. 4.

Of courſe Paul was fully and effectually expelled; and we hear no more of him in hiſtory.

Aurelian, hitherto, had been the friend of Chriſtians: but pagan ſuperſtition and its abettors drove him at length into meaſures of perſecution. The Chriſtians were in full expectation of ſanguinary treatment, when his death prevented his deſigns, in the year two hundred and ſeventy-five. A. D. 275.

Tacitus, the ſucceſſor of Aurelian, after a ſhort reign, left the empire to Probus; in whoſe ſecond year, and in the year of our Lord two hundred and ſeventy-ſeven, appeared the monſtrous A. D. 277. hereſy of Manes, of which the fundamental principle was the admiſſion of two firſt cauſes independent of each other, for the purpoſe of explaining the origin of evil. But I write not the hiſtory of hereſies: That has been performed with ſufficient accuracy by many, while we have very ſcanty information of the progreſs of TRUE religion.—This hereſy continued long to infeſt the Church; and neceſſity will oblige me hereafter, if this work be continued, to take notice of it more diſtinctly.

After Probus, Carus and his two ſons, Dioclesian began to reign in the year two hundred and A. D. eighty-four. For the ſpace of eighteen years this 284. emperor was extremely indulgent to the Chriſtians. His wife Priſca and his daughter Valeria were Chriſtians, in ſome ſenſe, ſecretly. The eunuchs of his palace and his moſt important officers were alſo Chriſtians; and their wives and families openly profeſſed the Goſpel. Chriſtians held honourable offices in various parts of the empire; innumerable crowds attended Chriſtian worſhip: the old buildings could no longer receive them; and, in all cities, wide and large edifices were erected*.

If

* Euſeb. Book 8. Chap. 1.

If Chriſt's kingdom had been of this world; and, if its ſtrength and beauty were to be meaſured by ſecular proſperity, we ſhould here fix the æra of its greatneſs. But, on the contrary, the æra of its actual declenſion muſt be dated in the pacific part of Diocleſian's reign. During this whole century the work of God, in purity and power, had been tending to decay: The connexion with philoſophers was one of the principal cauſes: Outward peace and ſecular advantages completed the corruption: Eccleſiaſtical diſcipline, which had been too ſtrict, was now relaxed exceedingly: biſhops and people were in a ſtate of malice: Endleſs quarrels were fomented among contending parties; and ambition and covetouſneſs had, in general, gained the aſcendency in the Chriſtian Church. Some there, doubtleſs, were, who mourned in ſecret and ſtrove, in vain, to ſtop the abounding torrent of the evil. The truth of this account ſeems much confirmed by the extreme dearth of real Chriſtian excellencies after the death of Dionyſius. For the ſpace of thirty years, no one ſeems to have ariſen like Cyprian, Firmilian, Gregory, or Dionyſius:—No biſhop or paſtor, eminent for piety, zeal, and labour.—Euſebius, indeed, mentions the names and characters of ſeveral biſhops; but he extols only their learning and philoſophy, or their moral qualities. He ſpeaks with all the ardour of affection concerning a miniſter in Cæſarea of Paleſtine, named Pamphilus,—but, in this caſe alſo, the beſt thing, he aſſerts of him, is "that he ſuffered much perſecution and was martyred at laſt."—This event muſt have happened in the time of the perſecution by Diocleſian, which begins juſt after the limits preſcribed to this volume.—Notwithſtanding this decline both of zeal and of principle;—notwithſtanding this ſcarcity

of

of evangelical graces and fruits, ſtill Chriſtian worſhip was conſtantly attended to; and the number of nominal converts was increaſing;—but the faith of Chriſt itſelf appeared now an ordinary buſineſs; and here TERMINATED, or nearly ſo, as far as appears, that great firſt Effuſion of the Spirit of God, which began at the day of Pentecoſt. Human depravity effected throughout a general decay of godlineſs; and one generation of men elapſed with very ſlender proofs of the ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt with his Church.

The obſervation of Euſebius, who honeſtly confeſſes this declenſion, is judicious. "The heavy hand of God's judgments began ſoftly, by little and little, to viſit us after his wonted manner: The perſecution, which was raiſed againſt us, took place firſt among the Chriſtians who were in military ſervice; but, we were not at all moved with his hand, nor took any pains to return to God: We heaped ſin upon ſin, judging, like careleſs Epicureans, that God cared not for our ſins, nor would ever viſit us on account of them. And our pretended ſhepherds, laying aſide the rule of godlineſs, practiſed among themſelves contention and diviſion."—He goes on to obſerve,—that the "dreadful perſecution of Diocleſian was then inflicted on the Church, as a juſt puniſhment and as the moſt proper chaſtiſement for their iniquities."

Toward the end of the century, while Diocleſian was practiſing the ſuperſtitious rites of divination, he became perſuaded that the ill ſucceſs of his attempts to pry into futurity, were owing to the preſence of a Chriſtian ſervant, who had made, on his forehead, the ſign of the croſs: and, he immediately in great anger, ordered not only thoſe, who were preſent, but all in his palace to ſacrifice to the gods, or, in caſe of refuſal, to be

ſcourged with whips *. He commanded alſo the officers of his armies to conſtrain all the ſoldiers to do the ſame, or to diſcharge the diſobedient from the ſervice. Euſebius alludes to this in the foregoing paſſage. Chriſtian truth, however, had not ſo univerſally decayed, but that many choſe rather to reſign their commiſſions, than to do violence to their conſciences.—Very few were put to death on this account.—The ſtory of Marcellus is remarkable †. Mr. Gibbon has undertaken to juſtify his execution, by repreſenting him as puniſhed purely for deſertion and military diſobedience. But, it is no unſual thing for this hiſtorian to ſuppreſs or to diſguiſe facts, when the credit of religion is concerned: and I might have added this inſtance to the liſt of his perverſions, which I formerly ſubmitted to the judgment of the public ‡. The truth is, the death of Marcellus was the effect of a PARTIAL PERSECUTION: New military rules, ſubverſive of Chriſtianity, were introduced: Chriſtian ſoldiers were ordered to ſacrifice to the gods; and they could not do this without renouncing their religion:—Otherwiſe, it was, in thoſe times, not uncommon for the followers of Jeſus to ſerve in the armies.

A. D. 298. It was in the year two hundred and ninety-eight, at Tangier in Mauritania, while every one was employed in feaſting and ſacrifices, that Marcellus the centurion took off his belt, threw down his vine-branch and his arms, and added, "I will not fight any longer under the banner of your emperor, or ſerve your gods of wood and ſtone. If the condition of a ſoldier be ſuch that he is obliged to ſacrifice to gods and emperors, I abandon the vine-branch and the belt, and quit the ſervice."

* Lactantius de morte perſecut.

† Acta ſincera, Fleury, Book 8, Chap. 27.

‡ See Milner's Gibbon.

ſervice." "We plainly ſee the cauſe," ſays Fleury, "that forced the Chriſtians to deſert:—They were compelled to partake of idolatrous worſhip." The centurion was ordered to be beheaded: And Caſſianus, the regiſter, whoſe buſineſs it was to take down the ſentence, cried out aloud that he was ſhocked at its injuſtice. Marcellus ſmiled for joy, foreſeeing that Caſſianus would be his fellow-martyr: In fact, he was actually martyred about a month after.

When I read Mr. Gibbon's account of this tranſaction, I concluded, that Marcellus had ſuffered on principles of modern quakeriſm.—Quite unneceſſary are any further remarks, on a ſubject, which is not in the ſmalleſt degree obſcure or uncertain.

Theſe preliminaries to the perſecution, with which the next century opens, did not, it ſeems, duly affect the minds of Chriſtians in general; nor was the ſpirit of prayer ſtirred up among them;—a certain ſign of long and obſtinate decay in godlineſs! There muſt have been, in ſecret, a lamentable departure from the lively faith of the Goſpel. Origeniſm, and the learning and philoſophy connected with it, were extremely faſhionable: And we conjecture, that the ſermons of Chriſtian paſtors had more, in general, of a merely moral and philoſophical caſt, than of any thing purely evangelical. In truth,—juſtification by faith,—hearty conviction of ſin,—and the Spirit's influences, are, ſcarcely, mentioned in all this ſeaſon. Moral duties, I doubt not, were inculcated,—but profeſſors of Chriſtianity continued immoral and ſcandalous in their lives. The ſtate of the Church of England from the time of Charles II. down to the middle of the laſt reign,—full of party, faction and animoſities and love of the world, yet in its public miniſtrations, adorned with learning, and abounding in external mora-

lity,—ſeems very much to reſemble that of the Chriſtian Church in manners and in piety, from the death of Dionyſius to the end of the century.—In one inſtance there was a great difference: Superſtition was much ſtronger in the antient Church; but, as it was enliſted in the ſervice of ſelf-righteouſneſs, and as the faith of Chriſt and the love of God was, in a great meaſure, buried under it, ſuch a diverſity does not affect the general likeneſs.

God, who had exerciſed long patience, declared at length in the courſe of his providence, "Becauſe I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be purged from thy filthineſs any more, till I have cauſed MY FURY TO REST UPON THEE*."

But this ſcene, which introduces quite a new face on the Church, and was quickly followed by ſeveral ſurpriſing revolutions, belongs to the next century.

* Ezek. xxiv. 13.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

SOME ACCOUNT OF GREGORY THAUMATURGUS, THEOGNOSTUS, AND DIONYSIUS OF ROME.

THESE three perſons are all, whom I can find belonging to the third century, to whom, according to my plan, ſufficient juſtice has not been done already. Of the two laſt, indeed, I have little to ſay. Of the firſt more is recorded. Euſebius* has given a ſhort account of him; and his life is written, at length, by Gregory of Nyſſen. Cave and Fleury have collected the moſt material things concerning him; but the former is more to be depended on.—I wiſh to furniſh the reader with every information that may appear valuable concerning this great man: I wiſh to ſeparate truth from fiction. Conſiderable allowance, no doubt, muſt be made for the growth of ſuperſtitious credulity:—I dare not, however, reject all that part of Gregory's narrative, in which miraculous powers are aſcribed to Thaumaturgus.—His very name† admoniſhes the hiſtorian to be cautious in this matter; and though no great ſtreſs, perhaps, ought to be laid on ſuch a circumſtance alone, it behoves us to remember that the ſame idea is ſupported by the concurrent teſtimony of antiquity.

He

* Book 6. Chap. 29. † Wonderworker.

He was born at Neocæſarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia. His father, zealous for paganiſm, took care to educate him in idolatry, and in the learning of the Gentile world.—He died when his ſon was only fourteen years of age.—The mother of Thaumaturgus took care, however, to complete his education and that of his brother Athenodorus, who was afterwards a Chriſtian biſhop, as well as himſelf.—He travelled to Alexandria to learn the platonic philoſophy, where he was equally remarkable for ſtrictneſs of life and for cloſe attention to his ſtudies. The renowned Origen, at that time, gave lectures in religion and philoſophy, at Cæſarea in Paleſtine. Thaumaturgus, his brother Athenodorus, and Firmilian, a Cappadocian gentleman, with whom he had contracted an intimate friendſhip, put themſelves under his tuition. This ſame Firmilian is the Cappadocian biſhop, whom we have, repeatedly, had occaſion to mention. The two brothers continued five years with Origen, and were perſuaded by him to ſtudy the holy Scriptures; and no doubt is to be made, but that the moſt aſſiduous pains were exerted by that zealous teacher to ground them in the belief of Chriſtianity.—On his departure he delivered an eloquent ſpeech in praiſe of Origen, before a numerous auditory;—a teſtimony at once of his gratitude and of his powers of rhetoric.

There is ſtill extant a letter written by Origen to Gregory Thaumaturgus*, in which he exhorts him to apply his knowledge to the promotion of Chriſtianity.—The beſt thing in it is,—that he adviſes him to pray fervently and ſeriouſly for the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Being now returned to Neocæſarea, he gave himſelf much to prayer and retirement; and, doubtleſs,

* Origen Philocab. C. 13.

leſs, was, in ſecret, prepared and diſciplined for the important work to which he was ſoon after called. Neocæſarea was a large and populous city, —full of idolatry,—the very ſeat of Satan; ſo that Chriſtianity could ſcarcely gain any entrance into it. Phædimus, biſhop of Amaſea, a neighbouring city, was grieved to ſee its profaneneſs; and hoping much from the piety and capacity of young Gregory, he took pains to engage him there in the work of the miniſtry. Gregory, from pure modeſty, endeavoured to elude his deſigns; but was at length prevailed on to accept the charge.

The ſcene was arduous. He had a Church to found, before he could govern it. There were not above ſeventeen profeſſors of Chriſtianity in the place. His name-ſake of Nyſſen ſeems to have been impoſed on by the ſuperſtitious ſpirit, then too prevalent, when he tells us that Gregory Thaumaturgus received, in a viſion, a creed from John the Evangeliſt and the Virgin Mary. But, as he aſſures us, that the original, written with his own hand, was preſerved in the Church of Neocæſarea in his time; and,—as this is a matter of fact of which any perſon might judge;—as the creed itſelf contains nothing but what is very agreeable to the language of the fathers of the third century;—and, as we have already ſeen the exact and ſteady pains with which they guarded the doctrine of the Trinity againſt hereſies,—I do not heſitate to conclude that he either actually compoſed the creed in queſtion, or received it as his own;—at the ſame time the intelligent reader, when he has conſidered its contents, and the conſequences deducible from them, need not be in the leaſt ſurpriſed at the induſtry * with which, in our times, its credit has been impeached. The whole creed is

* See Lardner's Credibility.

is as follows, and merits our attention the more,—because the orthodoxy of Gregory has been unreaſonably ſuſpected, againſt the expreſs teſtimony of Euſebius,—who, we have ſeen above,—repreſents him as one of the oppoſers of Paul of Samoſata, at the firſt council.

"There is one God,—The Father of the living Word, of the ſubſiſting wiſdom and power, and of HIM, who is his eternal expreſs Image: The perfect Father of him that is perfect: The Father of the only-begotten Son. There is One Lord, the only Son of the only Father; God of God; the Character and Image of the Godhead; the energetic Word; the comprehenſive Wiſdom by which all things were made; and the Power that gave Being to all creation: The true Son of the true Father: The Inviſible of the Inviſible: The Incorruptible of the Incorruptible: The Immortal of the Immortal: The Eternal of the Eternal. There is one Holy Ghoſt, having his ſubſiſtence of God; who was manifeſted through the Son to men: The perfect image of the perfect Son: The Life and the ſource of Life: The Holy Fountain: Sanctity and the Author of Sanctification; By whom is made manifeſt God the Father, who is above all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all. A perfect Trinity, which, neither in Glory, Eternity or Dominion, is ſeparated or divided."

Notwithſtanding the prejudices, which his idolatrous countrymen muſt have had againſt him, he was received by Muſonius, a perſon of conſequence in the city; and, in a very little time, his preaching was ſo ſucceſsful that he was attended by a numerous congregation. The ſituation of Gregory, ſo like that of the primitive Chriſtian preachers, in the midſt of idolatry, renders it exceedingly

ceedingly probable that he was, as they were, favoured with miraculous gifts: for THESE the Lord beſtowed in abundance, where the name of Jeſus had as yet gained no admiſſion; and, it is certain that miracles had not then ceaſed in the Church.

Gregory Nyſſen himſelf lived within leſs than a hundred years after Gregory Thaumaturgus; and both he and his brother,—the famous Baſil,—ſpeak of his miracles without the leaſt doubt. Their aged grandmother Macrina who taught them in their youth, had, in her younger years, been a hearer of Gregory. Baſil particularly obſerves, that ſhe told them the very words which ſhe had heard from him; and aſſures us that the Gentiles, on account of the miracles which he performed, uſed to call him a ſecond Moſes. The exiſtence of his miraculous powers, with reaſonable perſons, ſeems then unqueſtionable. It is only to be regretted that the few particular inſtances which we have come down to us are not the beſt choſen:—but, that he cured the ſick,—healed the diſeaſed,—and expelled devils; and,—that thus God wrought by him for the good of ſouls, and paved the way for the propagation of the Goſpel,—as it is, in itſelf, very credible, ſo has it the teſtimony of men worthy to be believed.

Gregory continued ſucceſsfully employed at Neocæſarea till the perſecution of Decius. Swords and axes, fire, wild beaſts, ſtakes, and engines for diſtending the limbs, iron chairs made red hot, frames of timber ſet up ſtraight, in which the bodies of the tortured were racked with nails that tore off the fleſh;—theſe and a variety of other inventions were uſed.—But the Decian perſecution, in general, was before deſcribed.—Pontus and Cappadocia ſeem to have had their full ſhare. Near relatives, in the moſt unnatural manner,

betrayed

betrayed one another: the woods were full of vagabonds: the towns were empty; the public priſons were found too ſmall; and the private houſes deprived of their Chriſtian inhabitants, became gaols for the reception of priſoners.

In this terrible ſituation of things, Gregory conſidered, that his new converts could ſcarce be ſtrong enough to ſtand their ground and be faithful: He, therefore, adviſed them to flee; and he encouraged them to that ſtep by his example. Many of his people endured much affliction, but God reſtored them at length to peace: Their biſhop returned again, and refreſhed and exhilarated their minds with his paſtoral labours.

In the reign of Gallienus the Chriſtians ſuffered extremely from the ravages of barbarous nations, which gave occaſion to Gregory's Canonical Epiſtle, ſtill extant,—in which rules of a wholeſome, penitential, and diſciplinarian nature are delivered.

The laſt ſervice which is recorded of him, is the part which he took in the firſt council concerning Paul of Samoſata. He died not long after. A little before his death he made a ſtrict enquiry whether there were any perſons in the city and neighbourhood ſtill ſtrangers to Chriſtianity: And being told there were about ſeventeen in all, he ſighed; and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, appealed to God how much it troubled him that ANY of his fellow-townſmen ſhould ſtill remain unacquainted with ſalvation: At the ſame time he expreſſed great thankfulneſs—that, whereas at firſt, he had found only ſeventeen Chriſtians, he ſhould now only leave that ſame number of idolaters.—Having prayed for the converſion of infidels and for the edification of the faithful, he peaceably, gave up his ſoul to the Almighty.

He

He was an evangelical man,—ſays Baſil, in his whole life: In his devotion he ſhewed the greateſt reverence: YEA and NAY—were the uſual meaſures of his communication:—How deſirable is it that thoſe, who profeſs to love Jeſus, ſhould uniformly practiſe the ſame! He never allowed himſelf to call his brother fool: No anger or bitterneſs proceeded out of his mouth: Slander and calumny, as directly oppoſite to Chriſtianity, he peculiarly hated and avoided. Lies and falſehood, envy and pride, he abhorred. He was zealous againſt all corruptions; and Sabellianiſm, which, long after in Baſil's time, reared up his head, was, ſilenced by the remembrance of what he had taught and left among them.—So Baſil tells us.

On the whole, the reader will with me regret, that antiquity has left us ſuch ſcanty memorials of a man ſo much honoured of God, ſo eminently holy, and ſo little inferior, in utility among mankind, to any, with which the Church of Chriſt was bleſſed, from the Apoſtles' days to his own times. For it is not to be conceived, that ſo great and almoſt univerſal a change in the religious profeſſion of the citizens of Neocæſarea could have taken place without a marvellous EFFUSION of the Holy Spirit in that place. And how inſtructive and edifying would the narrative be, if we were diſtinctly informed of its riſe and progreſs! Certainly,—the eſſentials of the Goſpel muſt have been preached in much clearneſs and purity. In no particular inſtance was the Divine influence ever more apparent ſince the apoſtolic age.

It is not eaſy to fix with preciſion, the time when Theognoſtus of Alexandria lived; though it be certain that he is later than Origen; and, that he muſt belong to the third century. He platonizes, after the manner of Origen, in ſome parts

of

of his writings; yet, he is cited by Athanaſius as a witneſs of the Son's conſubſtantiality with the Father. "For, as the Sun is not diminiſhed," ſays he, "though it produces rays continually, ſo likewiſe the Father is not diminiſhed in begetting the Son, who is his image." It is certain that this is Trinitarian language; and, though neither Theognoſtus nor Gregory, nor ſome others of the ancient fathers ſpake always of the perſons of the bleſſed Trinity, with ſo much exactneſs as afterwards was done, it would be an extreme want of candour to rank them with Arians, Sabellians, or the like, when there is the cleareſt proof that the foundation of their doctrine was really Trinitarian. Before this important article of faith had been contradicted, men did not perceive the neceſſity of being conſtantly on their guard reſpecting it: but when the hereſies were formed, they felt themſelves, urgently, called upon to expreſs themſelves with the moſt diligent preciſion. The want of attending to this juſt diſtinction has nurſed ſeveral unreaſonable cavils in the minds of thoſe who eagerly catch at every ſtraw to ſupport heretical notions.—Nothing is known of the life of Theognoſtus.—The proofs of his eloquence and capacity are clear and ſtrong*.

The injuſtice of the late attempts made to invalidate the evidences of the antiquity and of the uninterrupted preſervation of the doctrine of the Trinity within the three firſt centuries, requires me to mention one inſtance more, which, added to the many already mentioned, will, I think, authorize me to draw this concluſion,—that during the firſt three hundred years after Chriſt, though the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity was variouſly oppoſed, yet the whole Chriſtian Church conſtantly united in preſerving and maintaining it, even from the

* Du Pin, 3d Century.

the Apoſtles' days, as the proper ſphere, within which all the truth, and holineſs, and conſolation of genuine Chriſtianity lies; and, one may defy its boldeſt enemies to produce a ſingle inſtance of any real progreſs in Chriſtian piety, made in any place, where this doctrine was excluded.

We have before obſerved, that Dionyſius of Alexandria, through his zeal againſt the ſentiments of Sabellius, became ſuſpected of Arianiſm; and, that he fully exculpated himſelf. A Roman ſynod had been convened on that account; and Dionyſius of Rome*, in the name of the Synod, wrote a letter, in which he proves, that the Word was not created, but begotten of the Father from all eternity; and diſtinctly explains the myſtery of the Trinity. Such extreme nicety of caution in ſteering clear of two rocks like thoſe of Sabellianiſm and Arianiſm, between which, it muſt be confeſſed, the paſſage is narrow and ſtrait, demonſtrates,—that the true doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, which, with ſo much clearneſs, as to the exiſtence of the thing itſelf, though, neceſſarily, with perfect obſcurity as to the MANNER of the exiſtence, diſcovers itſelf every where in the Scriptures, was even then underſtood with preciſion, and maintained with firmneſs throughout the Church of Chriſt.

* Du Pin, ibid.

CHAP. XIX.

THE FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS CENTURY.

THE power of real Chriſtianity is always the ſtrongeſt and the cleareſt in its beginnings or in its revivals.—Exactly contrary to the proceſs in ſecular arts and ſciences, the improvements of following ages, unleſs they be favoured with freſh effuſions of the Holy Spirit, are, in reality, ſo many depravations of what was excellent in its infancy. For theſe reaſons, the object of this chapter would fall exactly within the deſign of the author of this hiſtory; and it would be a great ſatisfaction to his mind, to be able to explain, AT LARGE, the extenſion of the Goſpel in the third century.—But we muſt be content with ſuch materials as we have, and let the reader ſupply, from his own meditations, as much as he can, whatever he may think defective in the following ſcanty account.

A. D. 250. In the reign of Decius, and in the midſt of his perſecution, about the year two hundred and fifty, the Goſpel, which had hitherto been chiefly confined to the neighbourhood of Lyons and Vienne, was conſiderably extended in France. Saturninus was the firſt biſhop of Toulouſe, and at the ſame time ſeveral other Churches were founded;—as at Tours, Arles, Narbonne, and Paris. The biſhops of Toulouſe and Paris afterwards ſuffered for the faith of Chriſt; but they left Churches, in all probability, very flouriſhing in piety*. And France, in general, was bleſſed with the light of ſalvation.

Germany

* Book 1, Greg. Tours France, C. 30, Fleury 13, B. 6.

Germany was alſo, in the courſe of this century, favoured with the ſame bleſſing, eſpecially thoſe parts of it which are in the neighbourhood of France. Cologne, Treves, and Metz, particularly, were evangelized*.

Of the Britiſh iſles little is recorded; and that little is obſcure and uncertain: It is rather from the natural courſe of things and from analogy, than from any poſitive unexceptionable teſtimony, that we are induced to conclude that the Divine Light muſt have penetrated into our country.

During the miſerable confuſions of this century, ſome teachers from Aſia went to preach the Goſpel among the Goths who were ſettled in Thrace. Their holy lives and miraculous powers were much reſpected by theſe barbarians; and, many of them, from a ſtate perfectly ſavage, were brought into the light and comfort of Chriſtianity†.

The wiſdom and goodneſs of God ſo ordered events, that the temporal miſeries, which afflicted mankind in the reign of Gallienus, were made ſubſervient to the eternal intereſts of his cruel, blind, and infatuated creatures. The barbarians, who ravaged Aſia, carried away with them into captivity ſeveral biſhops, who healed diſeaſes, expelled evil ſpirits in the name of Chriſt, and preached Chriſtianity.—They were heard, in ſome places, with reſpect and attention; and became the inſtruments of the converſion of numbers‡. This is all that I can collect of the extenſion of the Goſpel among the barbarian ravagers.

* See Moſh. 3d Century.
† Sozomen, B. 13. 11. ‡ Ibid. B. 2. C. 5.

CHAP. XX.

A SHORT VIEW OF THE EXTERNAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE THIRD CENTURY.

IT is the duty of Chriſtians to ſhine as lights in the world, in the midſt of a CROOKED AND PERVERSE NATION. That this was actually the caſe, even in the third century, – though much leſs ſo than in the two former, and, toward the latter end of it with a very rapid diminution of the glorious brightneſs of the Goſpel,—the courſe of the foregoing narrative has, I truſt, made apparent.

Thoſe, with whom the real condition of the reſt of mankind in thoſe times, is familiar, will ſee this in the ſtrongeſt light. For three centuries, luxury, attended by every abominable vice that can be conceived, had been increaſing in the Roman empire. There want not lamentable proofs that the ſevere ſatires of Juvenal were but too well founded. ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED THEIR WAY. With the loſs of civil liberty, even the old Roman virtues of public ſpirit and magnanimity, – though no better, as Auguſtine ſays, than ſplendid ſins in their nature, – had vaniſhed. Civil broils and diſtractions continually prevailed for the greateſt part of this period, and increaſed the quantity of vice and miſery. The beſt time was, doubtleſs, during the reigns of Trajan, Adrian, and the Antonines: But, even under thoſe princes, the ſtandard of virtue was extremely low. The moſt

moſt ſcandalous and unnatural vices were practiſed without remorſe. Men of rank either lived atheiſtically, or were ſunk in the deepeſt ſuperſtition. The vulgar were perfectly ignorant: The rich domineered over the poor, and wallowed in immenſe opulence; while the provinces groaned under their tyranny: Philoſophers, with inceſſant loquacity, amuſed their ſcholars with harangues concerning virtue,—but they neither practiſed it themſelves, nor underſtood its real nature: By far the largeſt part of mankind,—namely, the ſlaves and the poor, were in remedileſs indigence: No methods whatever were deviſed for their convenience or relief: In the mean time, the pleaſureable amuſements of men,—as the ſtage and the amphitheatre,—were full of obſcenity, ſavageneſs, and cruelty.

This was the Roman world. We know much leſs of the reſt of the globe: which, however, in ferocious wickedneſs and ignorance, was ſunk much deeper than the nations that bowed under the yoke of the Cæſars.

Behold!—In the midſt of all this chaos, this corruption, and this ignorance, aroſe out of Judea a light of doctrine and of practice ſingularly diſtinct from any thing that was then in exiſtence!—A number of perſons,—chiefly of low life,—the diſciples of Jeſus of Nazareth, live as men ought to do,—with a proper contempt of this vain life,—with the ſincereſt and moſt ſteady ambition for another: They prove themſelves to be true philoſophers, if real love of wiſdom be allowed to conſiſt in the juſteſt views and worſhip of their Maker, and in actual acquaintance with his character,—in real moderation of their paſſions and deſires,—and in unfeigned benevolence to all mankind,—even to their enemies.

No ſound rules of philoſophizing will direct us to conclude all this to have been of MAN.—The WORK was of God: and this effuſion of his Holy Spirit laſted for three centuries,—debaſed indeed toward the end of that period, but not entirely extinguiſhed.

It was neceſſary, that this people,—diverſe from all others,—the followers of the ſame Jeſus of Nazareth,—ſhould have among themſelves ſome external order,—or, in other words, ſome eccleſiaſtical government.—An endleſs maze of controverſy preſents itſelf here; nor does there appear to be any certain divine rule on this ſubject. Men may ſerve God acceptably under very different modes of Church-government; and, in point of fact, theſe modes were different in different places during the primitive ages of Chriſtianity. This variety, however, does not appear to have been either ſo great, or ſo extreme, as to have excluded all general principles in the regulation of the external Church: Hiſtory enables us to diſcover,—at leaſt the rude outlines of an USUAL—of a PREVAILING PRACTICE,—which materially differed from moſt, if not from all the eccleſiaſtical forms of government, which now exiſt in the Chriſtian world.

The Apoſtles, who were the firſt teachers, and, who planted the firſt Churches, ordained ſucceſſors,—as far as appears,—without any conſultation of the reſpective flocks over which they were about to preſide. But, as it was neither reaſonable nor probable that any ſet of perſons after them ſhould be regarded as their equals, this method of appointing eccleſiaſtical rulers did not continue;—and, undoubtedly, the election of biſhops devolved on the people*. Their appearance to

* Bingham, Book 4. Chap. 11. Antiquities. Du Pin, end of third Century.

to vote on theſe occaſions, their conſtraining of perſons ſometimes to accept the office againſt their will, and the determination of Pope Leo, long after, againſt forcing a biſhop on a people againſt their conſent, demonſtrate this. The characters of men to be elected to this office were very ſtrictly examined. Public notice was given, that any one might inform againſt them, if they were vicious and immoral. The deciſion on their MORAL CONDUCT was left to the people;—that on their DOCTRINE belonged chiefly to the biſhops who ordained them. For the power of ordination belonged properly to biſhops alone, though preſbyters—a ſecond order of men, who appear to me all along diſtinct from them,—concurred with them and with the body of the people. The ſame power of electing, was, in ſome degree and in ſome inſtances, exerciſed by the people in the appointment of theſe very preſbyters; but the caſe is by no means ſo uniformly clear: and, in filling up the LOWER offices of the Church the biſhop acted ſtill more according to his diſcretion.

The uſe of deacons, the third order in the Church, is well known. Theſe three orders obtained very early in the primitive Churches. The epiſtles of Ignatius,—I build on thoſe parts only that are undoubtedly genuine,—demonſtrate this: and, in general, the diſtinction of theſe offices was admitted though the Chriſtian world.

Yet, if a Chriſtian people were grown very heretical, the biſhops thought themſelves bound in duty to provide for the inſtruction of the ſmaller number, who, in their judgment, loved the truth, as it is in Jeſus, by both electing and ordaining a biſhop for them. Likewiſe in ſending miſſionaries to the barbarous nations, it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that they waited for the choice

of the people.—They deputed and ordained whom they approved of for that end.

Beſides thoſe, which have been mentioned, there appear, in the third century, a number of lower officers, as door-keepers, ſub-deacons, acolyths or attendants, who, by degrees, had grown up in the Chriſtian Church. A much more candid and true account of them may be given, than what has been impoſed on us, with ſufficient malignity. It could not be to adminiſter to the pride and ſloth of the higher clergy, that ſuch offices were inſtituted. Chriſtians increaſed in number, and more labourers were required. Beſides, as they had not then any ſeminaries of learning, the ſerving of the Church in theſe lower offices was made an introductory ſtep to the higher ones: And this was their moſt important uſe*.

The authority of the biſhop was by no means unlimited;—but it was very great. Nothing could be done in the Church without his conſent. The extent of his dioceſe was called Παροικια. Some of theſe DIOCESES had a greater, others a leſs number of Churches which belonged to them. The dioceſe of Rome, before the end of the third century, had above forty Churches,—as Optatus obſerves;—and this agrees very well with the account before ſtated, namely,—that under Cornelius the biſhop, there were forty-ſix prieſts†.—Cornelius, according to the uſual practice in thoſe times, muſt, himſelf, have miniſtered—particularly at the chief or mother-church: and the prieſts, of courſe, muſt have taken care of the other Churches. But, diſtinct pariſhes, with preſbyters allotted to them, were not yet known in cities.

* Bing. Book 3, Chap. 1. Calv. Inſtitutes, Book the laſt.
† See Chap. IX. of this Volume—towards the end.

cities*.—It appears that the biſhop ſent them ſucceſſively to miniſter according to his diſcretion. The neighbouring villages, however, which were annexed to biſhoprics, could not be ſupplied in that manner: And they had,—even then,—ſtated pariſh prieſts,—who acted under the authority of the biſhop.

That biſhops were not merely congregational paſtors, ſeems evident from the nature of things, as well as from the concurrent teſtimony of all antiquity. There were ſeven biſhops who belonged to the ſeven churches of Aſia, called Angels in the Book of the Revelations. It is abſurd to ſuppoſe that the great Church of Epheſus, in the decline of St. John's life, ſhould be only a ſingle congregation; and, moſt probably, the ſame is true of all the reſt. Suppoſing the Chriſtian brethren to conſiſt of only five hundred men; theſe, with their families and ſervants, and occaſional hearers, would make an aſſembly large enough for any human voice. But, it is more probable that the number of Chriſtians at Epheſus amounted to many thouſands. This was the caſe at Jeruſalem†: And, in Chryſoſtom's time, the Church of Antioch, conſiſted of a hundred thouſand. Perhaps it might compriſe half that number in the latter end of the third century.—Nevertheleſs, it is ſtill certain, that dioceſes were then much ſmaller than in after times: and the vaſt extenſion of them proved very inconvenient to the cauſe of godlineſs. Archbiſhop Cranmer wiſhed to correct this evil in our national Church: and HE wanted neither zeal nor judgment.—But that and many other good things ſlept with the Engliſh Reformers.

The choice of biſhops and,—in part at leaſt—of preſbyters by the people, is a cuſtom which ſeems

* Bing. Book 9, Chap. 8. † Acts xxi. 20.

ſeems to have grown naturally out of the circumſtances of the Church at that time. The firſt biſhops and preſbyters were appointed by the Apoſtles themſelves*; nor could I ever diſcover the leaſt veſtige in Scripture of their appointment by the people. There was not a ſufficient judgment in any of them for this truſt; the world being, at that time, Pagan, or Jewiſh, or at leaſt, infant in Chriſtianity. Apoſtolical wiſdom and authority, under God, ſupplied the want in the next ſucceſſion of biſhops. As the judgment of the people matured, and, eſpecially, as the grace of God was powerful among them, they were rendered better qualified to be the electors of their eccleſiaſtical governors. Precedents, not Scriptural indeed, but of very high antiquity, were ſet; and the practice continued during at leaſt the three firſt centuries. On the other hand I do not find that the people had any power in depoſing a biſhop: The cognizance of the crimes of biſhops was left to a council or ſynod of neighbouring biſhops and preſbyters; and in that, as well as all material affairs which concerned the Church in general, the authority of ſuch councils was held very great, from early times; nor does it appear that the Chriſtian laity had any direction in them.—The well authenticated caſe of Paul of Samoſata is very inſtructive here.

In furniſhing this rough ſketch of primitive eccleſiaſtical government, I would be underſtood, neither to provoke nor to invite any controverſy on this contentious ſubject. I have given my own ſentiments,—but, at the ſame time, I confeſs, that I feel no ſurprize that controverſies ſhould have been ſtarted in a matter, where ſomething may be ſaid—for epiſcopacy,—for preſbytery, and—for independency.

* Acts xiv. 23.

dependency. To me it ſeems an unhappy prejudice, to look on any one of the forms as of DIVINE RIGHT, or of Scriptural authority. — Circumſtances will make different modes more proper, in one place, and at one time, than at another.—And, whoever reſts in this concluſion, will be in no danger of bigotry,—but, on the contrary, will ſee much reaſon for moderation and latitudinarian indifference in judging of various methods, which have been propoſed or made uſe of for the EXTERNAL regulation of the Church.—Let zeal be employed and ſpent by all ſincere Chriſtians in what is really Divine and Scriptural;—in what is INTERNAL, and truly eſſential to the immortal intereſts of mankind.—The arguments for the three forms of Church-government, as ſupported by experience, may be briefly ſtated thus:—In no one inſtance does the independent plan appear to have a ſolid foundation either in Scripture or antiquity; yet, the interference of the people, and the ſhare of authority exerciſed by them,—though never on the plan of independent congregations,—gives ſome plauſible colour to INDEPENDENCY. The preſbyterian ſyſtem ſeems to be Scriptural and primitive, ſo far as the inſtitution of the clergy is concerned, but defective for want of a biſhop. The epiſcopal form, no doubt, obtained in all the primitive Churches without exception; but—what effectually checks the pride of thoſe who are fond of the pomp of hierarchy,—it muſt be confeſſed, that ANCIENT epiſcopacy had no ſecular mixtures and appendages: and, further, the paſtoral character of biſhops, together with the ſmallneſs of their dioceſes, always adapted to paſtoral inſpection, made them more ſimilar to the preſbyterian hierarchy.—When facts are actually balanced in this way, or nearly ſo, violent party or prejudice

may

may ſtill lead men to view even hiſtorical evidence in oppoſite lights; nevertheleſs, men of cool and ſedate judgment will not differ much in their opinions.

The diſcipline of the primitive Church was very ſtrict; it even degenerated, as has been obſerved, into exceſſive ſeverity. A clergyman, once depoſed for flagitiouſneſs was never reſtored to his order. This MIGHT be right.—Another cuſtom, which prevailed at length, cannot be vindicated. A perſon once ejected for his vices from the Church might be reſtored*;—on a relapſe, being again ejected, he could never be favoured with Church-communion,—though by no means ſuppoſed to be neceſſarily excluded from the mercy of God in Chriſt.—Their jealous care againſt hereſies has been abundantly ſhewn; and their ZEAL againſt viciouſneſs of practice was equal to this. Suppoſe, it be allowed that this zeal was carried to too great a length; and, even, that it was mixed with ſuperſtition, yet,—in compariſon of the licentiouſneſs of our times,—how beautiful does it appear! and how demonſtrative of the power and reality of godlineſs among them!

Chriſtian aſſemblies were then frequented with great conſtancy, and the Euchariſt was generally adminiſtered whenever they met for public worſhip. But ſtill greater proofs of their ſuperior regard to God and to every thing that is really good, remain yet to be mentioned.

Their liberality to the indigent was wonderful; There was nothing like it at that time in the world. The Jews were a very ſelfiſh, hard-hearted people: The Gentiles lived in luxury and ſplendor, if they could;—but, care for the poor ſeems to have made no part of their juriſprudence, nor to have

* Du Pin.

have been at all a faſhionable virtue. I never could learn that philoſophers, though they harangued inceſſantly concerning virtue, either much recommended, or practiſed any kindneſs to the bulk of mankind,—that is, the ſlaves and the vulgar. Indeed their precepts are particularly directed to the higher ranks, and they ſeem to forget that the lower orders belonged to the human ſpecies. An hoſpital, an alms-houſe, or any ſimilar proviſion for the poor, was unknown in the pagan and philoſophic world. But, when the religion of HIM, who is no reſpecter of perſons, began to gain ground, the barbarous ſpirit of ariſtocracy loſt its dominion among Chriſtians, though it ſtill prevailed in the manners of the reſt of mankind. Chriſtians felt themſelves ALL ſinners: ALL, in the ſight of God, on a level.—Bound, indeed, to preſerve a due ſubordination of ranks, and whatever is wholeſome in government, the Chriſtian maſter, however, before God conſidered his ſlave, as his equal, and as redeemed by the ſame atoning blood of his Saviour. The pride of birth, ſtation, and quality, was cruſhed: The obedient diſciple of Chriſt, followed the example of his compaſſionate Lord, and made it his buſineſs to relieve the miſerable.—We have ſeen above a thouſand and fifty widows and impotent perſons maintained by the liberality of the Roman Church under Cornelius; we have ſeen alſo the active charity of the archdeacon Laurentius, in finding out and aſſiſting miſerable objects, puniſhed with a fiery death: The very ſpirit and taſte of Chriſtians, with the frugality and ſimplicity of their lives and manners, enabled them abundantly to help the neceſſitous; while the reſt of the world perſecuted them, and while philoſophers themſelves,

ſelves, dependent on the great, and deſpiſing the poor, vainly babbled againſt them.

"O God of all grace, whoſe tender mercies are over all thy works,—THIS muſt be thy religion,—which humbled and ſweetened the hearts of men, which taught them practically to regard all men as brethren, and to delight in doing good to all, without diſtinction of perſons!"—The pagans themſelves admired this brotherly love.

But the moſt ſingularly ſtriking characteriſtic of this people has not yet been noticed.—Though they had a regular polity, guarded by great ſtrictneſs of diſcipline, diſtinguiſhed into a number of communities, each adminiſtered by a biſhop, preſbyters, and deacons; and concentrated by general councils held from time to time; they neither had, nor ſtrove to obtain the leaſt ſecular ſupport of any kind. They lay expoſed to the rage of the whole world around them, incited by its natural enmity againſt God and by the love of ſin; and exaſperated on finding itſelf condemned by theſe upſtarts as deſervedly obnoxious to the Divine diſpleaſure. The whole Roman world comprehended thouſands of diſcordant ſects and parties,—which all tolerated one another, becauſe all agreed to treat ſin with lenity, and to allow one another's religion to be right, on the whole. It was impoſſible for Chriſtians to do this: Hence the ſpirit of perſecution was excited; and, whoever at this day lives in the ſame ſincere hoſtility againſt all ſin, and in the exerciſe of the ſame charity, patience, and heavenly-mindedneſs as they did, will undeſignedly, yet aſſuredly, excite, in a ſimilar manner, the diſpleaſure of the reſt of mankind.—Now, it is very eaſy to underſtand, how precarious, on this account, their ſituation in ſociety muſt

muſt have been!—They had not the leaſt legal or ſecular aid againſt perſecution. Obliged, like the reſt of the ſubjects of the Roman empire, to contribute to the general defence, and to ſerve in the Roman armies, when called on, they had no civil privileges:—If an emperor choſe to perſecute them, they were perfectly defenceleſs; they had no political reſource againſt oppreſſion.

What could be the reaſon of this? Shall we ſay "their circumſtances, during the firſt three hundred years, were too low, and their means too weak to encourage them to attempt reſiſtance or innovation of any kind?"—This has been ſaid—inconſiderately it ſhould ſeem—by thoſe who are not willing to allow that their paſſiveneſs under injuries proceeded from principle. Let us ſuppoſe, therefore, for a moment, that they thought it right to reſiſt THE POWERS THAT BE, and that thoſe who reſiſt DO NOT RECEIVE TO THEMSELVES DAMNATION, but merit the tribute of applauſe for ſupporting the natural rights of man; then, as no people on earth were ever more unjuſtly treated, they would naturally feel their injuries as other men do; and admitting them to have been too weak and inconſiderable, in the firſt century, to have reſiſted with effect;—ſurely, in the ſecond, and much more in the third, their thouſands and tens of thouſands muſt have been capable of ſhaking the very foundations of the empire.—So far from being without means, they ſeem to have had much greater than many who have diſturbed the repoſe of kingdoms

Here is "IMPERIUM IN IMPERIO,"—a regular well-united phalanx of men, inured to frugal habits and to a variety of hardſhips; not a mere mob of levellers, but men taught to obey their religious governors, and ſubmitting to great ſtrict-

neſs

neſs of diſcipline. Among their governors, if hiſtory had not informed us ſo, we are ſure there muſt have been ſome men of genius, fortitude, and capacity, who already had exerciſed their talents in the art of government, and who poſſeſſed that eloquence which can inflame the paſſions, eſpecially of the lower ſort. Cyprian of Carthage is undoubtedly one of theſe. The ſame courage, capacity, diſcretion, and activity, which made him an oracle over half the Roman empire among the Chriſtians, would,—if it had been exerted in a military line,—have been formidable to the throne of the Cæſars. Their brethren in the Roman armies could have taught them military diſcipline: The riches, which a number of them poſſeſſed, might have purchaſed arms and military ſtores: Thoſe captive biſhops, who gained ſo ſtrong an aſcendant over the ignorant and barbarous nations, might have eaſily effected alliances between them and others of the Chriſtian name.

Let the reader mark the inference to be drawn from theſe conſiderations.—We pretend not to ſay, who would have prevailed in the end of ſuch a conteſt, becauſe nothing is more uncertain than the iſſue of arms: but ſuppoſing the Chriſtians to have thought reſiſtance lawful, we maintain that, amidſt the diſtractions of the Roman empire from within and from without, they had both temptations and probabilites ſufficiently ſtrong to have induced them to excite ſeditions and rebellions againſt their perſecutors and oppreſſors.—In knowledge and civilization they were not inferior to thoſe among whom they lived: It cannot be denied that they were very unjuſtly treated; and that they poſſeſſed the probable means of redreſſing themſelves by force;

force: and further,—we are now arguing on the ſuppoſition that they thought it lawful to USE thoſe means,—I affirm then, that which ever way we turn, we muſt be preſented with the ſame concluſion,—namely, that, under ſuch circumſtances, reſiſtance would infallibly have taken place;—whereas,—on the contrary, it appears,—not from a few ſcattered paſſages, but from the whole tenour of the writings of the Chriſtians—and, what is ſtill more, from their uniform practice, without any exception, that they thought it UNCHRISTIAN to ſeek this mode of relief. Patience, and prayer, and charity were their only arms: Nor is it poſſible to find a ſingle inſtance of a Chriſtian intermeddling with the politics of HIS time.

Muſt we not then conclude—That they underſtood the rules laid down in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans, and other parts of the New Teſtment of like import, in their plain, and literal ſenſe?—That they thought it wrong to revenge injuries, public as well as private, and referred themſelves wholly to him who hath ſaid, "Vengeance is mine!"—I believe we have no other alternative: This was the ſum of Chriſtian politics; and, in this way of underſtanding the Goſpel-rules of ſubmiſſion and of ſuffering,—it is not hard to conceive, what an advantage ſuch a ſpirit of patience and of abſtraction from ſecular politics proved to them, in making them feel themſelves ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth, in cauſing them to long for the heavenly ſtate, in deadening their affections to the world, and in exerciſing them in faith and charity: And, whenever real Chriſtians, in our times, ſhall more fully emancipate themſelves from the ambitious notions, with which the preſent habits and prejudices of men infect them, and, through Divine Grace, ſhall catch this ſame ſpirit of the primitive believers, they will then ſee a

beauty in the New Teſtament-principles on this ſubject, of which they have now little idea.—The love of the world will then ceaſe to entangle them ſo ſtrongly; and primitive apoſtolic faith and practice will again viſit the earth in its genuine ſimplicity.

The monaſtic ſpirit, I have already obſerved, had begun to appear during the Decian perſecu-
A. D. tion. About the year two hundred and ſeventy
270. lived Anthony the Egyptian, the firſt founder of theſe communities. Athanaſius has written his life; and, I doubt not, but many moderns may judge the employment to be a proof of weakneſs of mind. Poſterity will, probably, requite them by being equally raſh and uncandid in paſſing a ſimilar cenſure on preſent characters.—In truth, Athanaſius was a man of ſolid ſenſe and great capacity; but theſe endowments are not always a defence againſt faſhionable errors; and unhappily, the Monkiſh ſuperſtition was, in his time, growing up into high admiration.—It is much to be wiſhed, that men adverted more cloſely to the "ſins which eaſily beſet themſelves" in their own days; for then, they would be leſs quick-ſighted in diſcovering the abſurdities of former ages, and alſo leſs diſpoſed to form oſtentatious and phariſaical compariſons between what they term modern excellencies and ancient defects.—Anthony, it ſeems, perverting a few texts of Scripture, took upon himſelf to live in ſolitude. His auſterities were exceſſive: and the moſt ridiculous ſtories are told of his conteſts with the devil: They merit not the leaſt attention: I obſerve in them, however, a dangerous ſpirit of ſelf-righteous pride and vainglory, by which this ſame Anthony was encouraged in his progreſs, and which will lead a man very far in external ſhews of holineſs, while there is little

of

of the reality. It is probable that his life, as it is recorded by Athanaſius, might, as ſuperſtition grew more and more reputable, appear admirable in the eyes of many perſons, who were much better men than this celebrated Monk himſelf.

We ſhall, for the preſent, leave Anthony, propagating the monaſtic diſpoſition, and extending its influence not only into the next century, but for many ages after, and conclude this view of the ſtate of the third century, with expreſſing our regret —"that the faith and love of the Goſpel received, toward the cloſe of it, a dreadful blow from the encouragement of this un-chriſtian practice."

CHAP. XXI.

TESTIMONIES TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST FROM ITS ENEMIES.

THE faſtidious indifference at leaſt, if not the virulent enmity, ſhewn to the Goſpel by the great men of Greece and Rome, during the three firſt centuries, leaves one little reaſon to expect much account of Chriſtians through the channel of THEIR writings. Nor is the caſe materially different in our own days.—A few curſory, ſarcaſtic, and ill-informed reflections are all that, in writers of polite eſtimation, can be found, concerning more modern revivals and propagation of evangelical truth and godlineſs. Something, however, of this ſort is to be gleaned, which may throw light on the ſtate of religion in the ſecond and third centuries: And, perhaps, Celſus will be more to our purpoſe than all the other authors together; particularly, if we attend to the extracts from his writings preſerved by Origen.—My views in preſenting the reader with the following few quotations from heathen authors, is, not merely to eſtabliſh the general credibility of the Goſpel, but rather, to illuſtrate the character of real Chriſtians, and to point out ſome of the effects of the work of the Holy Spirit upon their minds.

In the former part of the ſecond century flouriſhed the Stoic Philoſopher Epictetus. Arrian has publiſhed his diſcourſes. In one paſſage he occaſionally

occaſionally ſpeaks of "the Galilæans, as indifferent to ſufferings,—from madneſs or from habit."

Theſe Galilæans are obviouſly Chriſtians.—Through the operation of what cauſe they were indifferent to ſufferings, we ſhall be willing to learn from thoſe who better underſtand the ſubject. Indeed they took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, becauſe they were convinced that they had, in heaven, a better and an enduring ſubſtance. Chriſtian faith and hope afford motives truly deſerving a better name than madneſs or habit. But the fact is atteſted by this prejudiced philoſopher,—namely, that Chriſtians were then expoſed to ſingular ſufferings, and that they bore them with a compoſure and ſerenity ſo aſtoniſhing, that philoſophers knew not how to account for their patience.—They did not underſtand, that they were ſtrengthened with might, by the glorious power of their God, to all patience and long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs.

In the ſame century, Apuleius, a ludicrous author, in his Metamorphoſis ſpeaks of a baker, a good ſort of man, troubled with a bad wife,—who was poſſeſſed of every vice;—perverſe,—a drunkard,—lewd,—a follower of vain obſervances,—and a woman, who pretended that the Deity was ONLY ONE.

I conjecture that Apuleius would have taken no notice of her other crimes, if ſhe had not been guilty of this laſt. Mark the revolution in ſentiment, which Chriſtianity has made in the world. Throughout Europe the character of any man's underſtanding would, at preſent, be much impeached, who ſhould ſeriouſly aſſert a plurality of Gods.—In the ſecond century, the belief of the Divine Unity is, by a polite author claſſed with an aſſemblage of vices.—What have ye been doing, philoſophers,

that ye never could rid mankind of that polytheiſm, which every philoſopher now deſpiſes?—Open the eyes of your underſtandings, and learn that God has effected this mighty change by the Goſpel.—This woman was, doubtleſs, a Chriſtian by profeſſion; but we cannot now tell, whether ſhe merited the reproaches with which her memory is loaded; nor can we ſay, in what ſenſe her huſband, who was plainly a pagan, deſerved the appellation of a good ſort of man;—but we know that the world, without much ſcruple, denominates its followers to be good ſort of men;—and we alſo know who ſaid,—"If ye were of the world, the world would love its own."

The extracts from Celſus,—who wrote in the latter end of the ſecond century,—preſerved in Origen's work againſt him, are very valuable in the light which I have ſtated. I ſhall ſelect a few paſſages, partly from my own obſervations, and partly from the collections of others.—The reader muſt be prepared to hear bitter things. A more ſpiteful calumniator hardly ever exiſted; but he may ſerve a purpoſe which he never intended:—When the following extracts have been ſeriouſly conſidered, the juſt inferences to be drawn from them, concerning the nature of the Goſpel, and the characters of its profeſſors, cannot fail to preſent themſelves to the mind of every candid enquirer after truth.

"When they ſay,—Do not EXAMINE, and the like, in their uſual manner, ſurely, it is incumbent on them to teach what thoſe things are which they aſſert, and whence they are derived."

"They ſay,—Wiſdom in life is a bad thing, but folly is good."

"Chriſt was privately educated, and ſerved for hire

hire in Egypt*: he got acquainted with miraculous arts there; he returned; and, relying on his power of working miracles, declared himſelf God."

"The Apoſtles were infamous men, publicans, and abandoned mariners."

"Why ſhould you, when an infant, be carried into Egypt, leſt you ſhould be murdered? God ſhould not fear being put to death."

"Ye ſay that God was ſent to ſinners; but why not to thoſe, who were free from ſin; What harm is it not to have ſinned?"

"Ye encourage ſinners, becauſe ye are not able to perſuade any really good men; therefore ye open the doors to the moſt wicked and abandoned."

"Some of them ſay, do not EXAMINE, but BELIEVE, and thy FAITH ſhall ſave thee."

With a ſneer he makes the Chriſtians ſay,—"Theſe are our inſtitutions: Let not any man of learning come here, nor any wiſe man, nor any man of prudence; for theſe things are reckoned evil by us. But whoever is unlearned, ignorant, and ſilly, let him come without fear."—"Thus, they own that they can gain only the fooliſh, the vulgar, the ſtupid ſlaves, women and children.—They, who converſed with him when alive, and heard his voice, and followed him as their maſter, when they ſaw him under puniſhment and dying, were ſo far from dying with him or for him, or from being induced to deſpiſe ſufferings, that they denied that they were his diſciples:—but now YE die with him."

"He had no reaſon to fear any mortal now, after he had died, and, as ye ſay, was a God;—therefore,

* The authenticity of St. Matt. 2d chap. which has been unreaſonably denied, is ſupported by this paſſage.

—therefore, he ſhould have ſhewn himſelf to all and particularly, to him that condemned him."

"He perſuaded only twelve abandoned ſailors, and publicans, and did not perſuade even all theſe."

"At firſt, when they were but few, they agreed: But when they became a multitude they were rent again and again; and each will have their own factions; for they had factious ſpirits from the beginning."

"They are now ſo ſplit into different ſects, that they have only the name left them in common."

"All wiſe men are excluded from the doctrine of their faith: They call to it only fools and men of a ſervile ſpirit."

He frequently upbraids Chriſtians for reckoning him, who had a mortal body, to be God; and looking on themſelves as pious on that account.

"The preachers of their Divine Word only attempt to perſuade fools,—mean and ſenſeleſs perſons,—ſlaves,—women and children.—What harm can there be in learning, or,—in appearing a man of knowledge? What obſtacle can this be to the knowledge of God?"

"We ſee theſe itinerants ſhewing readily their tricks to the vulgar, but not approaching the aſſemblies of wiſe men; nor daring to ſhew themſelves THERE: but where they ſee boys,—a crowd of ſlaves,—and ignorant men,—there they thruſt in themſelves and puff off their doctrine."

"You may ſee weavers, taylors, and fullers, illiterate and ruſtic men, in their houſes,—but not daring to utter a word before perſons of age, experience, and reſpectability: it is, when they get hold of boys, and of ſilly women, privately, that they recount their wonderful ſtories; it is then that they teach their young diſciples that they muſt not mind their fathers or their tutors, but obey THEM: Their fathers and guardians, they tell

tell them, are quite ignorant and in the dark, but themſelves alone have the true wiſdom. And if the children take this advice, they pronounce them happy; and direct them to leave their fathers and tutors, and to go, with the women and their play-fellows, into the chambers of the females, or into a taylor's or fuller's ſhop, that they may learn perfection."

"In other myſteries, the cryer uſed to ſay, whoever has clean hands, and a good conſcience, and a good life, let him come in. But let us hear whom THEY call. "Whoever is a ſinner, a fool, an infant, a loſt wretch,—the kingdom of God will receive him"—"An UNJUST man, if he humble himſelf for his crimes, God will receive him; but a JUST man, who has proceeded in a courſe of virtue from the beginning, if HE look up to him, he will not be received."

He compares a Chriſtian doctor to a quack, who promiſes to heal the ſick, on condition that they keep from intelligent practitioners, leſt his ignorance be detected.

"Ye will hear them,—though differing ſo widely from one another, and abuſing one another ſo foully,—making that boaſt,—"The world is crucified to me, and I to the world *."

"The ſame things are better ſaid by the Greeks, and without the imperious denunciation of God, or the Son of God."

"If one ſort introduce one doctrine, another another, and all join in ſaying, "Believe, if ye would be ſaved, or depart;" what are they to do, who deſire really to be ſaved? Are they to determine by the throw of a dye? Where are they to turn themſelves, or whom to believe?"

"Do

* Gal. vi.

"Do ye not ſee, that any man, that will, may carry you away and crucify you and your demon:—The Son of God gives you no help?"

But enough of Celſus.—He would not deſerve a moment's attention, if it were not for the light which he throws on the hiſtory of the Chriſtians of his own times,—that is,—of the ſecond century.

It appears evident that there was then a ſingular ſort of perſons, ſubject to all manner of ill treatment from the reſt of the world; and who might be hunted down at pleaſure by violence or by calumny.—Celſus inſults them on account of their defenceleſs condition. If they had reſiſted evil with evil, his malignity would have induced him to have reproached them on account of their turbulence and ſeditiouſneſs. Undoubtedly then, they were a meek, quiet, peaceable, inoffenſive people. It appears alſo,—that they worſhipped a perſon, named Jeſus, who had been crucified at Jeruſalem, and,—that they worſhipped him as GOD; and Celſus derides their folly in ſo doing: In his view of things, that the ſame perſon ſhould be both God and man, was the greateſt inconſiſtency. Their doctrine concerning Chriſt appears to him fooliſh beyond meaſure; fit only for the underſtanding of fools, and beneath the regard of wiſe men. Even from his looſe and ſarcaſtic views of it one may conclude, that they laid great ſtreſs on FAITH:—and that the exerciſe of it was conſidered as connected with ſalvation; but that this exerciſe, in its whole nature, was contrary to all that is eſteemed wiſe and great in the world. It was alſo a great ſtumbling block to Celſus,—that men the moſt wicked and abandoned might be ſaved by faith in Jeſus, and,—that men's confidence in moral virtues was a bar to their ſalvation. Nor does it appear that the number

number of converts among the learned or the great was conſiderable:—The lower ranks of men were beſt diſpoſed to receive it; and the bulk of Chriſtian profeſſors conſiſted of theſe.

From theſe premiſes, with a careful ſtudy of the ſacred volume, any man, poſſeſſed of a humble ſpirit, may ſee WHAT THE RELIGION WAS, which Celſus ſo vehemently reprobates. It could not be the doctrine of common morality. He owns, indeed, they taught this, though he ſays that the philoſophers taught it better. One may appeal to any perſon almoſt at this day, whether Chriſtian morals be not immenſely ſuperior to any thing that is to be learnt from Plato, Tully, or Seneca. It has been the faſhion to extol the moral part of Scripture,—I fear, with an inſidious eye to the DOCTRINAL. What this laſt was in Celſus's days, he himſelf, in a meaſure, tells us:—Namely, "Chriſt crucified, the living and true GOD, the only Saviour of ſinful men;—the neceſſity of renouncing our own wiſdom and righteouſneſs;—ſalvation through faith alone;—dependence on our ſuppoſed goodneſs, ruinous and fatal."—It is certain, that mere moral truths, if they had formed the main part of the Chriſtian ſcheme, would not ſo much have provoked the enmity of Celſus.

In other words,—the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel, man's fallen ſtate, juſtification by Jeſus Chriſt alone, divine illumination and influence, theſe, which excite the ill-will of man in his natural ſtate now as much as they did then;—THESE were plainly the doctrines which occaſioned ſuch miſrepreſentation and abuſe as that, which we have ſeen.

If the ſerious reader would take the trouble to examine a variety of controverſial writings publiſhed againſt the revival of godlineſs in our own times, he could not fail to be ſtruck with a remarkable conformity

conformity of taſte and ſentiment between Celſus and many who call themſelves Chriſtian paſtors. Circumſtances vary: The DRESSES of religious profeſſion alter according to the courſe of things in this world; and hence, the undiſcerning will be liable to form a wrong eſtimate. But, in reality, there is no "NEW thing under the ſun."—That, which, in our times, has been derided as ENTHUSIASM, was treated in the manner we have juſt deſcribed, by Celſus and others, in the third century; and he, who pleaſes, may now ſee in England the ſame ſort of perſons, living by the faith of the SON of GOD, and held in contempt by perſons of the ſame ſtamp as Celſus.—It has frequently been well obſerved, that this adverſary of Jeſus Chriſt gives a good teſtimony to the miracles and facts of the Goſpel;—and I add, with much ſatisfaction, that he is alſo, an excellent witneſs to the work of the Spirit of God in his day, by ſhewing us what ſort of doctrine was preached and profeſſed by Chriſtians at that time.

Lucian of Samoſata was a contemporary of Celſus. He has already been mentioned, as throwing conſiderable light on the hiſtory of Chriſtians, in the ſtory of Peregrinus. The deluſion into which this hypocritical profeſſor was ſuffered to fall, after his apoſtacy, deſerves to be noticed as a warning to thoſe, who uſe the name of Jeſus for a cloak to ſiniſter purſuits.

He publickly burnt himſelf in the ſight of all Greece, ſoon after the Olympic games were over*. He did it to gain himſelf a name, and "he had his reward."—Heathen authors ſpeak honourably of him. The luſtre of his philoſophic life and his oſtentatious ſuicide expiated, in the eyes of men of this world, the guilt and infamy of his juvenile profeſſion of the Goſpel.—A ſtatue was erected to him

* Lardner's Collect. Chap. xix.

him at Parium in Myſia, which was ſuppoſed to be oracular.

The depth of iniquity, in a Chriſtian view, may ſeem, to miſguided and vain philoſophers, the perfection of virtue. "THE LORD SEETH NOT AS MAN SEETH."

Lucian tells us alſo of a perſon, named Alexander, who deluded mankind by oracular falſehoods. Some Epicureans detected and expoſed his fallacies, which made him declare that Pontus was full of Atheiſts and CHRISTIANS, who had the aſſurance to raiſe ſlanderous ſtories againſt him: And he excited the people to drive them away with ſtones. He inſtituted myſterious rites, like thoſe of Athens; and, on the firſt day of the ſolemnity, proclamation was made,—as at Athens,—to the following effect: "If any Epicurean, CHRISTIAN, or Atheiſt, be come hither as a ſpy upon theſe myſteries, let him depart with all ſpeed.—A happy initiation to thoſe, who believe in God." Then they thruſt the people away,—he going before and ſaying, "Away with the Chriſtians:" then the multitude cried out again, "Away with the Epicureans."

We ſee here again that there is nothing "NEW under the ſun." A fervent or artful ſupporter of old pagan ſuperſtions finds himſelf oppoſed by two ſorts of people, the moſt oppoſite to one another, which can poſſibly exiſt,—Epicurean ſceptics or men of no religious principle,—and Chriſtian believers: So at this day,—Chriſtians and Sceptics will unite in diſcountenancing Papal ſuperſtitions;—but with how different a ſpirit!—The one with compaſſion and gravity,—the other with careleſſneſs and levity:—and, with how different a deſign!—The former to eſtabliſh the true worſhip of God,—the latter to ſpread univerſal infidelity.

The

The Greek author, Lucian, was himſelf an Epicurean,—abounding in wit and profaneneſs. His dialogues are full of ſarcaſtic inſinuations againſt the faſhionable idolatry.—He was not aware, that he was co-operating with Chriſtians in ſubverting the abominations, which had ſubſiſted for ſo many ages. His writings were, doubtleſs, of uſe in this reſpect: And, who can foreſee how ſerviceable, under God, the preſent faſhionable ſpirit of depreciating and lowering Popery may be to the future general eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity,—though nothing be farther from the thoughts or wiſhes of our preſent political ſceptics and infidels?

There is a dialogue, called Philopatris, aſcribed to Lucian, but probably written by ſome other perſon ſomewhat later. No doubt, it is of high antiquity. It ridicules the doctrine of the Trinity. "ONE THREE, THREE ONE. The moſt high God; Son of the Father; the Spirit proceeded from the Father." Such are the expreſſions in the dialogue. The author ſpeaks alſo of "a beggarly, ſorrowful company of people:" He inſinuates their diſaffection to government;—that they wiſhed for bad news and delighted in public calamities;—and that ſome of them faſted ten whole days without eating, and ſpent whole nights in ſinging hymns."—Who does not ſee in all this the miſrepreſentation of an enemy, deſcribing men of holy lives and mortified affections, who worſhipped the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt; and who, in their deſires and temper, were elevated above the world?

Ariſtides the Sophiſt, another contemporary of Celſus, ſpeaks with indignation againſt certain perſons of his day, whom, he obſerves, in manners to be

be not unlike the impious people in Paleſtine; for they acknowledge not the gods: they differ from the Greeks and all good men, are dextrous in ſubverting houſes and diſturbing families: they contribute nothing to public feſtivals, but dwell in corners, and are wonderfully "wiſe in their own conceits*."

Thus, when men were out of humour with any perſons, they compared them to Chriſtians, who, in this way, were made the "off-ſcouring of all things." —By ſuch evidences as theſe, however, their ſingular abſtinence from all reigning vices and follies, their ſteady adherence to the worſhip of the living God, and the ſtrength of the divine operations on their minds, are proved beyond contradiction.

Much about the ſame time, Galen, the famous phyſician, gave teſtimony to the firmneſs and perſeverance of Chriſtians: "It is eaſier," ſays he, "to convince the diſciples of Moſes and Chriſt than phyſicians and philoſophers who are addicted to particular ſects;"—ſo that their fortitude or obſtinacy was PROVERBIAL at that time; and, further, —they were a people then well known in the world.

Plotinus was, in this century, one of the moſt celebrated diſciples of the new Platonic ſchool, the genius of which, as formed by Ammonius, has been before deſcribed. He had ſtudied under Ammonius himſelf; and, by the ſtrength of his parts, the multiplicity of his literary acquiſitions, and the gravity of his manners, he attained a very high reputation in the world. He imitated Socrates in his pretentions to a communion with a demon; and was, by his diſciples, looked on as ſomething celeſtial. Perſons of the greateſt quality

* Lardner's Collect. Chap. xx.

lity revered him: The emperor Gallienus was, once, on the point of giving him a ruined city in Campania, in which he might ſettle a Platonic republic.—The man ſeems, to his dying day, to have ſupported his philoſophic reveries.—When he was actually dying, he ſaid, "I am endeavouring to rejoin that, which is divine in us, to the divine part of the univerſe*." Undoubtedly he alluded to the NOTION of "God being the ſoul of the univerſe,"—that Pantheiſtic compound of pride and atheiſtic abſurdity, which was the proper creed of moſt of the ancient Philoſophers, and was even more impious than all the fables of vulgar Paganiſm†.

The oracle of Apollo, we are told, after his death, informed his admirers that his ſoul was in the Elyſian fields with Plato and Pythagoras.—Such were the artifices by which Satan and his human followers endeavoured to raiſe up rivals to the Chriſtians. In a work profeſſedly illuſtrating the operations of the Spirit of God, it ſeemed proper to take notice of the contraſts, or rather of the counterfeits by which the ſpirit of falſehood endeavoured to ſupport the declining cauſe of idolatry.—Its vulgar and groſs ſcenes were, in part, abandoned, and a more refined habit was given to it by philoſophy, which pretended to wiſdom and virtue in a high degree. But human philoſophy could not produce holineſs, becauſe humility and the faith of Jeſus were not there: Pride was its predominant feature; and while thouſands found, even in this life, the ſalutary benefits of Chriſtianity, vain philoſophers prated concerning virtue, but

* Fleury.

† See this point ably diſcuſſed in Warburton's Legation of Moſes.

but effected nothing either for the honour of God, or the good of mankind.

One of the moſt ſtudious and laborious diſciples of Plotinus was Amelius. It is evident, from a* paſſage of Euſebius, that he made attempts to unite ſomething of Chriſtianity with Platoniſm, juſt as we have ſeen Origen,—who was of the ſame ſchool,—mix ſomething of the latter with the former, to the great prejudice of the Goſpel. "This was the Word," ſays he, "by whom, he being himſelf eternal, were made all things that are;—the ſame whom the barbarian affirms to have been in the place and dignity of a principle, and to be with God, and to be God: by whom all things were made, and in whom every thing that was made has its life and being; who, deſcending into body and putting on fleſh, took the form of man; though he even then gave proof of the majeſty of his nature; nay, and after his diſſolution he was deified again, and is God, the ſame he was before he deſcended into body, and fleſh, and man."

This may be called no mean teſtimony to the Goſpel of St. John,—for he is, doubtleſs, the barbarian here mentioned:—The ideas of Chriſtianity, it ſeems, in ſome looſe ambiguous manner, were admitted by theſe philoſophers, and incorporated into their ſyſtem: and ſo, in modern times, Swedenburg, Rouſſeau, or Bolingbroke, have not been unwilling to enoble their compoſitions with ſublime ſentiments taken from the ſacred writings, but confuſedly underſtood; while yet, they ſtood aloof from the ſociety of Chriſtians, affected to think them little better than barbarians, and made not, in

* Euſeb. Pr. Ev.—See Lardner's Collections, Chap. xxxiii.

in their own caſe, the leaſt approach to the faith and love of Jeſus.

Thus alſo Longinus, a ſcholar of the ſame ſchool, and well acquainted with Plotinus, in his treatiſe on the ſublime, produces a fine quotation from the firſt chapter of Geneſis, and calls Moſes, a man of no mean genius *. Likewiſe, a fragment of this ſame writer, which has been preſerved; —and of which I ſee no reaſon to doubt the authenticity,—ſpeaks of Paul of Tarſus, as one of the greateſt of orators; and alſo, as the firſt ſupporter of a doctrine by no means proved to be true.

This paſſage is exactly in the ſtyle of Longinus,—rather nervous than elegant.—It is found in a manuſcript of the Goſpels of very good authority;—and no ſufficient reaſon has been given for ſuſpecting its genuineneſs.—The internal evidence is all againſt ſuch a ſuſpicion. The ſuppoſed author was a moſt judicious critic,—if ever there was a perſon in the world, who deſerved that character;—and therefore he was very capable, by the excellency of his taſte, of ſeeing and reliſhing the BEAUTIES of St. Paul's compoſitions: He poſſeſſed a very candid temper,—which would diſpoſe him to acknowledge them; and he was perfectly indifferent in regard to religion,—which accounts for his overlooking what ought, principally, to have fixed his attention. For theſe reaſons, I reject the gratuitous and improbable aſſertion, which has been made,—that this clauſe concerning St. Paul was forged by ſome Chriſtian.

We ſee, hence, how well Chriſtians were known in the third century;—and what reſpect their doctrine, even then obtained in the world from thoſe, who, as far as their own perſonal intereſts

* Ου τυχων ανηρ.

intereſts might be affected, were either averſe to embrace the Goſpel, or at leaſt quite careleſs concerning it.

Porphyry is the laſt unwilling witneſs for Chriſtians whom I ſhall mention within the third century. There is a work, indeed, bearing his name, entitled the Philoſophy of Oracles, in which there are very ſtrong teſtimonies in favour of the Goſpel: but as it appears to have been written in the time of Conſtantine, or, after the civil eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, the conſideration of it properly belongs to the hiſtory of the next century.

This man was born at Tyre in Phœnicia,—was a ſcholar of Plotinus, and,—like the reſt of that ſchool,—maintained a gravity of manners, and entered vigorouſly into Platonic refinements. —In acrimony againſt Chriſtians he far exceeded them all. He took much pains to overturn the Goſpel; and it muſt be confeſſed his learning and acuteneſs were conſiderable. The very few fragments extant of his works afford us no great opportunity to judge of the extent of his capacity, or of the depth of his judgment: but, from the ſerious pains taken by the ancient Chriſtians to confute him, we may conclude that his abilities were of a far higher order than thoſe of Celſus.

In a paſſage, preſerved by Euſebius*, he cenſures the famous Origen for leaving Gentiliſm and embracing the barbarian temerity,—that is, the Goſpel. That he ſtates the fact erroneouſly, is certain: for Origen was brought up under Chriſtian parents; but I had almoſt ſaid, that that great man merited ſuch a reproach on account of the extravagant reſpect, which he payed to

* Euſeb. Book 6, Chap. 18.

to the enemies of Chriſtianity.—Porphyry allows him to have been a great proficient in philoſophy; and ſays,—that he was very converſant with Plato, Longinus, and the works of the Pythagoreans and Stoics;—and, that he learnt from theſe the allegorical method of explaining the Greek myſteries, and, by forced interpretations inconſiſtent in themſelves, and unſuitable to thoſe writings, applied it to the Jewiſh Scriptures.

FAS EST ET AB HOSTE DOCERI.—The fanciful mode of Origen in interpreting Scripture is here juſtly condemned by Porphry: or, which is the ſame thing,—the Ammonian ſcheme is allowed by him to be unſuitable to thoſe writings. Origen did much miſchief by making ſuch attempts: Let the word of God ſtand ſimple and alone: and let philoſophers be left to their own inventions: —The enmity of Porphyry was not abated by the complaiſance of philoſophizing Chriſtians; nor did their conceſſions make any converts to evangelical truth.

His captious reaſonings againſt the book of Daniel ſhew him to be a bitter, but ineffectual adverſary to Chriſtianity: The conſideration of theſe, however, fall not within our deſign.—The ſame may be ſaid of various cavils which he made to many paſſages in the Goſpel:—We have ſeen a ſufficient ſpecimen of the ſame ſpirit in Celſus.

Ingenuity and malevolence, when united, ſeldom fail in forming plauſible objections, wherever opportunities offer. The cenſure which St. Paul, in the Epiſtle to the Galatians, has left upon St. Peter, engaged the attention of Porphyry, and induced him, from an occaſional difference between the Apoſtles, to form an* argument againſt the whole of their religion. I have, already, in the

* Lardner's Collections, Chap. xxxvii.

the former part of this volume, ſtated my deliberate judgment on this ſubject;—and, I may here add,—that the very clear teſtimony which St. Peter, toward the concluſion of his ſecond epiſtle, gives to the inſpired character of St. Paul, at the ſame time that it demonſtrates the harmony of the Apoſtles, remains one of the faireſt monuments of St. Peter's humility and candour.—On examination, then, it appears, that theſe attacks of enemies are, in fact, ſo many evidences of the virtues and graces of the Chriſtians. Surely truth, and wiſdom, and goodneſs may well be preſumed to be with thoſe, whom their adverſaries aſſault with ſuch frivolous objections.

On account of an epidemical diſorder raging in a certain city, Porphyry obſerves, "Men wonder now that diſtempers have ſeized the city ſo many years: they forget that Æſculapius and the other gods no longer dwell among them: for, ſince Jeſus was honoured, no one has received any public benefit from the* gods."

What a teſtimony is this to the great progreſs of Chriſtianity in his day! Malevolence CONFESSES, at the very time that it impiouſly and abſurdly complains.

"Matrons and women," ſays Porphyry, "compoſe their ſenate, and rule in the churches; and the prieſtly order is diſpoſed of according to their good pleaſure†."

The falſity of all this is notorious; but the teſtimony here given, by the mouth of an enemy, to the piety of the female Chriſtians, is perfectly agreeable to the accounts of the New Teſtament, and to the hiſtory of all revivals of godlineſs in every age;—in none of which women had the government;

* Euſebius. † Ibid.

government; but, in all a great perſonal concern by their pious exertions. "There is neither male nor female, but YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

"If Chriſt be the way of ſalvation, the truth, and the life; and if they only, who believe in him ſhall be ſaved, what became of the men who lived before his coming*?"

The reader has often heard ſimilar objections made in our days. The Chriſtians preached then the ſame doctrine of ſalvation,—ONLY BY CHRIST,—which is now ſtigmatized as uncharitable.

"A perſon aſked Apollo how to make his wife relinquiſh Chriſtianity? It is eaſier perhaps, replied the oracle, to write on water, or to fly into the air, than to reclaim her. Leave her, in her folly, to hymn in a faint mournful voice the dead God, who publicly ſuffered death from judges of ſingular wiſdom†."

This ſtory, told by Porphyry, is a memorable teſtimony of the conſtancy of Chriſtians.—It alſo hence appears, that they were accuſtomed to worſhip Jeſus as God; and, that they were not aſhamed of this, notwithſtanding the ignominy of his croſs. The atteſtation, however, here given of the wiſdom of Caiaphas and of Pontius Pilate, will not ſo readily be admitted.

The enemies of vital godlineſs, in our days, may ſee from the various cavils and miſrepreſentations contained in theſe extracts, that their ancient brethren in infidelity have been beforehand with them in all their moſt material objections. The doctrine, the ſpirit, and the conduct of real Chriſtians, appears from theſe evidences: And the work

* Euſebius. † Bullet's Hiſtory.

work of the Spirit of God on the hearts of men, in attaching them to Jeſus, and in divorcing them from all that the world delights in, is no leſs manifeſt than the malignity of our depraved nature in hating and oppoſing it.

CHAP. XXII.

CONNECTION BETWEEN THE DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

I AM ſenſible that many parts of the foregoing hiſtory may appear to ſeveral perſons defective in point of candour.—"Why ſuch ſolicitude to prove men Trinitarians in opinion?—Why ſo ſtrict an eye kept, all along, on the doctrines commonly called Evangelical by enthuſiaſts and ſectaries?—Of what importance are opinions, if men's practice be right?—Why is not all the ſtreſs of commendation laid on holineſs of life, on integrity, and on charity?"

This language is ſpecious, but is chargeable with the following erroneous notion:—It ſuppoſes that there is no real connexion between doctrine and practice. Now, a ſound Chriſtian cannot admit,—however faſhionable the ſentiment may be,—that all ſorts of religious opinions are equally influential, or equally ineffective in the production of virtuous conduct. The Scripture connects ſanctification with belief of the truth*. Our Lord himſelf prays that his diſciples may be "ſanctified through the truth†:" "The blood of Chriſt purges the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God‡:" And a right faith in Jeſus "overcomes the world."—St. John challenges men to prove that they can overcome the world by any other way§: and,

* John 17, 18. † 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. ‡ Heb. ix. 14.
§ 1 John v. 5.

and, in the chapter now alluded to, he is very particular in deſcribing what that faith is. In fine, Chriſt gave himſelf for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works *."—If then this zeal for good works be the EFFECT of HIS redemption,—how is it poſſible that a perſon, who diſbelieves the important doctrines eſſentially concerned in that redemption, ſhould have any true zeal for good works. By the ſuppoſition, the man never uſes, but has an averſion to, the means, which God has expreſsly appointed and made neceſſary for the attainment of this end.—Let this conciſe argument be well conſidered.

The peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel are,—Original ſin,—Juſtification by the grace of Jeſus Chriſt,—His Godhead and atonement,—the Divinity and the efficacious influences of the Holy Ghoſt. We appeal to the Scriptures for the proof of this aſſertion. If it cannot be proved THENCE, it is not to be proved at all. The tradition of the Church, if it were more uniform than it is, can never ſufficiently demonſtrate it. But ſtill, an authentic hiſtory of the character of the firſt Chriſtians is very inſtructive,—and as ſuch, merits our moſt ſerious attention. We have found that the doctrines juſt ſtated were, in the primitive times, conſtantly held by men allowed to be the moſt wiſe and upright. Surely, ſo remarkable a fact might well induce thoſe, who, in our times, oppoſe theſe doctrines with all their power,—to heſitate a little,—to entertain doubts whether their own ſentiments be right; and laſtly—no longer to call their adverſaries zealots in SPECULATIVE religion.—One would think, that when the Scripture itſelf affirms the exiſtence of a connexion between

* Titus ii. 14.

between faith and practice, and when the hiſtory of Chriſtian antiquity exemplifies that connexion, neither the articles of belief themſelves ought to be coldly denominated SPECULATIVE, nor the zeal uſed in ſupporting them be reproached with the contemptuous name of ENTHUSIASM.—Such reflections as theſe, it is hoped, may remove from the mind of the reader any unfavourable idea of the hiſtorian's diſpoſition in regard to candour.—True candour conſiſts,—not in endeavouring to render an adverſary contemptible by uſing the hard terms, enthuſiaſt, fanatic, bigot, and ſuch like; but in fairly bringing forward and digeſting evidence, and in drawing warrantable inferences from it.

Two things have been ſhewn to have uniformly taken place during the three firſt centuries;—firſt, that there exiſted, all along, a number of perſons bearing the Chriſtian name, whoſe lives proved them to be "the excellent of the earth." And ſecondly, that, as far as appears, the character of genuine virtue belonged excluſively to men who eſpouſed the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel. From the Apoſtles down to Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenæus; and, from them, to the age of Origen, both theſe aſſertions are demonſtrable by the cleareſt evidence.

Origen alone, of all perſons of ſuperior reputation in the Church, has been ſuſpected as deficient in point of orthodoxy. If the ſuſpicion were ſwelled into a certain proof, the diſcredit, which his philoſophic mixtures have brought on his character, and the cenſures, which ſo many wiſe and good men have ſo freely paſſed on him, as unſound in the faith, would rather prove our aſſertion of the uniformity of Chriſtian belief in theſe articles than the contrary. But, that Origen, on the whole, believed theſe doctrines, is ſufficiently

ficiently proved by expreſs paſſages of his works: —and his well-known curious and adventurous ſpirit of enquiry in ſubjects on which he never meant to be poſitive, will account for his ambiguities.

I cannot allow Dionyſius of Alexandria, merely becauſe he was once ſuſpected to be heretical, to be an exception to my poſition. His notorious explanation of himſelf ſufficiently confutes the ſurmiſe. The age of Cyprian is full of the moſt luminous proofs. Even the treatiſe of Novatian on the Trinity is itſelf a ſtrong argument on the ſame ſide of the queſtion. An elaborate, copious and diſtinct treatiſe on ſuch a ſubject written by an innovator,—and the FIRST DISSENTER,—againſt whom I have freely owned the beſt men of thoſe times were much too cenſorious,—would doubtleſs have been branded with peculiar infamy in the Church, if it had contained any ſentiments contrary to the apoſtolic faith. Its deviation from truth would have been marked with peculiar aſperity. But it is univerſally allowed, that the Novatians held the ſame doctrines as the general Church, and differed only in point of diſcipline. What greater proof can be deſired than ſuch an uniformity?

Perhaps the caſe of Paul of Samoſata may illuſtrate the ſubject ſtill more forcibly.—A biſhop was, by the concurrent voice of the whole Chriſtian Church, degraded and expelled, becauſe he oppoſed theſe doctrines.—The excellent lives of men of orthodox views are evident in theſe times of true goodneſs. I cannot find any proofs of ſuch excellence in other perſons who called themſelves Chriſtians. I acknowledge the ſcantineſs of hiſtorical materials: I make allowance for the prejudices of writers; and, I do not forget, that the compoſitions

compoſitions of none, but of the orthodox of thoſe times, have come down to us. But, after all, it ſeems impoſſible to reject the repeated teſtimony of ſuch a man as Irenæus, to the wickedneſs of the heretics.—The immoral character of Paul of Samoſata is well known; and men of real holineſs and virtue can ſcarce be entirely hid in any age in which they exiſt.

We have been told indeed great things of the Ebionites; and they have been ſet up as the true ſtandard of primitive orthodoxy. But it ſeems ſcarcely poſſible for any man of learning, who has a diſpoſition to examine things fairly and candidly, to lay weight on ſuch a wild and groundleſs opinion.—Who is this Ebion?—"Who is this uncircumciſed Philiſtine, that he ſhould defy the armies of the living God?"—Let it be admitted that he and his party believed and thought of St. Paul and of Chriſtian doctrines, and of Chriſt himſelf, exactly as ſome perſons do, who at this day call themſelves RATIONAL Chriſtians.—Will it thence follow that the holy Scriptures will be beſt interpreted by conſulting the opinions of an obſcure perſon, of whom all we know is contained in only a few lines, and whoſe very exiſtence is but faintly proved; and whoſe ſect alſo, though it had certainly an EARLY, if any, exiſtence, was condemned in the Chriſtian churches, and even by Origen himſelf, as heretical*?

It muſt be admitted that the Ebionites, in not receiving St. Paul's Epiſtles, as Origen tells us, acted CONSISTENTLY. THEIR ſentiments, and thoſe of St. Paul, are in direct oppoſition to each other.—But, what are we to think of men who rejected thirteen epiſtles of the new teſtament, of whoſe divine authority there never was any doubt among real Chriſtians?

And,

* See Origen ad. Celſum, Book 5, towards the end.

And, though the Epiſtle to the Hebrews has abundant proofs of Divine inſpiration, yet, if one were to allow, for a moment, that it was only the work of ſome pious perſon of very high antiquity in the Church, and held in very great eſtimation, who, that ſoberly examines the balance of evidences, would heſitate to decide that its authority greatly exceeded any poſſible reſpect due to the opinions of the Ebionites? Then,—in this regular argumentative compoſition we find certain doctrines enlarged on very much, and ſupported by the united voices of the Old and New Teſtament, —which doctrines, by an obſcure ſect, of whom we, literally, know next to nothing, are barely denied.—A chain of cloſe reaſoning on the one hand;—mere poſitive aſſertions on the other!

In judging of hiſtorical evidence, no rule can be better founded, than that—the concurrent teſtimony of the beſt writers ought always to outweigh the ſingle affirmation of any particular perſon.—It is on this ground that the relation of Perſian affairs by Cteſias is looked on as romantic. The account of the death of Cyrus alſo, as ſlain by Tomyris, the Scythian Queen, has no credit, becauſe of the ſuperior credibility of Xenophon, and of other hiſtorians. And he would be thought a weak critic in hiſtory, who ſhould in our days aſſert, that

"Charlemagne, with all his peerage, fell by Fontarabia."

Milton, as a poet, may be allowed to ſay this on the evidence of romances: But ſober hiſtory, which aſſerts in general the contrary, muſt be believed.—On ſuch weak foundations ſeems to me to ſtand the authority of the Ebionites in matters of Chriſtian doctrine.

Let

Let not the reader forget, that the object of this whole argument is to eſtabliſh the indiſſoluble connexion, which ſubſiſts between principle and practice.—For this purpoſe it may be uſeful to attend a little to the INTERNAL NATURE of Chriſtian principles.

If there be a favourite point in Scripture, it is the recommendation of humility. The truly humble, with all their imperfections, will be admitted into heaven; the proud, with all the virtue compatible with pride, will be excluded. Thoſe doctrines, therefore, which ſupport humility muſt be divine: thoſe, which nouriſh pride muſt be "earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh*." Now the evangelical doctrines, juſt mentioned, are all of the former ſort. The more they are reliſhed and admired, the more do they direct the mind to honour God, to feel even infinite obligation to him, to entertain the loweſt ideas of ourſelves, to confound the pride of intellect, of riches, of virtue, of every thing human. To ſing ſalvation to God and the Lamb, to confeſs our deſert of deſtruction, and to aſcribe our deliverance from it to the atoning blood of Jeſus,—this is the employment of heaven. The taſtes and tempers adapted to ſuch employment muſt be formed here on earth by GRACE; and the whole work of the Spirit, which we have ſeen exemplified in three centuries, is to produce and ſupport theſe diſpoſitions: And, in the words and actions of holy men, we have ſeen this effect. They believed heartily the truth of doctrines the moſt humiliating. They were poor in ſpirit, and patient under the ſevereſt treatment and the moſt cruel injuries, becauſe they were conſcious of deſerving much worſe: they were contented in the meaneſt circumſtances, becauſe they

* James iii. 15.

they felt the beauty of HIS condeſcenſion, who though HE was rich became poor for their ſakes, and who has provided for them ſure and eternal riches. They were ſerene and confident in God, becauſe they viewed HIM as their Father through the grace of Chriſt; they were full of charity, becauſe they knew the love of God in Chriſt: and, in honour they preferred others to themſelves, becauſe they were ever conſcious of their own depravity:—in fine,—they gladly endured reproach for Chriſt's ſake, becauſe they knew his kingdom was not of this world.

Now take from theſe men the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel, and all the motives and ſprings within them of thoſe actions, which are peculiar Chriſtian, are annihilated.—Mere morals, as taught by ſenſible heathens, and whatever was by them eſteemed reputable in ſocial life, may remain; but that, which is properly of a pious and humble nature, is no more.

For, whoever daily feels himſelf to be helpleſs, corrupt, and unworthy; the man, whoſe hope of divine favour cannot exiſt for a moment, but under the belief of the moſt ſtupendous grace; the man, who is compelled to pray by the voice of conſtant internal neceſſity, and who experiences the anſwer of prayer by repeated ſupernatural aids, ſuch an one muſt be habituated to the perpetual exerciſe of cultivating humbling reflections concerning himſelf, and GRATEFUL feelings towards his Maker. It is eaſy to ſee what a foundation is here laid of meekneſs, gentleneſs, modeſty, ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and of genuine compaſſion for the moſt wicked and moſt injurious,—the truly humbled Chriſtian always remembering that he himſelf, by nature, is a child of wrath, as well as others.—Nor is there a virtue among the numerous

numerous ones, for which the primitive Chriſtians were ſo much renowned, but it may be traced up to theſe principles.

It has been ſaid, indeed,—that the ſenſe of gratitude to God may be as ſtrong in the minds of thoſe who think better of human nature, in its preſent ſtate, becauſe they muſt own they are indebted to God for their natural powers and faculties. But the very feelings of the ſame human nature itſelf contradict the poſition. Something like gratitude and humility may be produced, where men are every moment, by experience, made ſenſible of their dependent condition: not ſo, where they only admit it in general theory, but are not led, experimentally, to an habitual ſenſe of their real ſtate. Do parents expect to find a more grateful and more humble conduct in their children, by making them completely independent at once, or, by ſupplying them liberally indeed, but ſtill in ſuch a way as to keep them continually ſenſible of their dependence?

The influence of anti-evangelical doctrines on the practice is but too evident.

—Thoſe, who eſpouſe them, if preſerved, by providence, in the practice of a decent moral conduct, are, among ourſelves at this day, the proudeſt of men. Even when they attempt to be humble, the power of pride breaks forth and bears down all before it. They feel and diſcover great ſelf-ſufficiency: No ſubject of religion is too hard for their underſtandings: and, in all diſputable queſtions, they are ſure to decide in that way which moſt gratifies vain-glory and ſelf-conceit. The teachers of this ſtamp, however low and limited in capacity and education, are continually exerciſing the moſt unbounded, and often the moſt ridiculous arrogance. They are apt to wonder that

that the common people have no EARS for them: They do not conſider that they themſelves have no VOICE for the people. The views of God, of Chriſt, and of human nature, which they exhibit, ſuit not the unſophiſticated taſte of the common people, but rather accord with the pert and vain notions of dabblers in theology and metaphyſics. In a word, they contradict experience; and it is not to be wondered at,—that thoſe of their hearers, who have any reaſonable modeſty, and the leaſt tincture of humility, cannot reliſh their diſcourſes, becauſe the only food which is adapted to the taſte of a miſerable ſinner is not miniſtered to them. Deſerted by the populace, ſuch miniſters as theſe uſually betake themſelves to the higher claſſes: The favour of a few perſons of rank compenſates to them the want of regard from the multitude; and if they cannot boaſt of numerous congregations, they conſole themſelves at leaſt with the thought, that theirs are genteel.—Their own account of them is "that they are both genteel and rational."

Politics,—the affairs of nations,—the reformation of ſtates; THESE are to them the grand ſcenes which agitate their paſſions. To inſtruct miniſters of STATES is their ambition: To bring ſouls to Chriſt is left to thoſe, whom they, contemptuouſly, denominate Enthuſiaſts. Nor does the leaſt true pathos appear in any of their writings and orations, except in the ſupport of civil liberty,—a ſubject, moſt important and moſt valuable, no doubt; but, with them, ever carried to exceſs, and, even when treated in its beſt manner, belonging rather to the province of ſtateſmen and of legiſlators than to that of divines.—Whoever has attended to the demeanour of theſe men, cannot fail to have marked them, as evidently haughty, overbearing, impatient of contradiction; and, of all

others, the leaſt fitted, in their tempers, to ſuffer for the croſs of Chriſt: They are, however, exceedingly prone,—to repreſent themſelves as actually perſecuted;—to enlarge on the iniquity of all reſtraining or excluding laws in eccleſiaſtical concerns;—and, laſtly, with much arrogance, to boaſt of their ſincerity and ſoundneſs in matters of religion,—in an age, when every one knows that there is not the leaſt probability of their being compelled to undergo any fiery trial that might be the teſt of true Chriſtian zeal, fortitude, and patience.

Are THESE the Chriſtians of the three firſt centuries?—Or, were thoſe, whom Celſus ſcorned, ſuch men as THESE?—The facts preſented to the reader, in this volume, forbid the concluſion.—For, if indeed they were men of this claſs, their worldly and ambitious ſpirit might eaſily have found ſome of the many pretenders to the Roman empire, with whom they might have united. We ſhould have ſeen Chriſtians active in politics, bargaining with different competitors for the empire, and inſiſting on ſome communication of temporal powers and privileges to themſelves. Men, ſo void of heavenly ambition, would have diſplayed that which is of the earth; and if Ebion's religious ſentiments were then as prevalent as they are now, the humble, meek, charitable, paſſive Chriſtians would not have adorned the hiſtoric page; but, on the contrary, the predominant characters of the foregoing narrative, muſt have much more reſembled the turbulent, aſpiring, political ſons of Arius and Socinus in our own times.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.